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# A S E R M O N

Preached by the  
Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. JOHN CONDER,  
*May 11, 1758,*

At the ORDINATION of the  
Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. JOHN STAFFORD  
TO THE  
Co-Pastorship with JOHN GUYSE, D. D.,  
In the CHURCH OF CHRIST meeting at  
*New-Broad-Street :*

TOGETHER  
With an INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE by the  
Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. THOMAS GIBBONS,  
The CHURCH'S Recognition of their Call,  
Mr. STAFFORD'S Acceptance of it, his Con-  
fession of FAITH,  
And an EXHORTATION delivered to him by  
the Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. THOMAS HALL.

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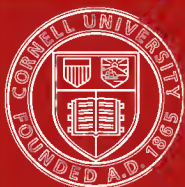
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T H E

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

**A**S our Lord Jesus Christ exercises a Dominion over the World above, and the World below, so in each of these Provinces of his Empire he has a People set apart for himself, who are the Objects of his special Favour, who willingly bow to the Sceptre of his Government, and esteem it both their Honour and Happiness to render him their Homage and their Praise. Heaven is made up, without a single Exception, of Inhabitants of this amiable Temper, and there is not a disloyal or disaffected Mind towards our blessed *Emmanuel* throughout all *the ten thousand times ten Thousand, and Thousands of Thousands* \* of Angels, and Spirits of just Men made perfect, that fill the Regions of the celestial Glory. The innumerable Multitudes there are ever receiving the rich and satisfying Communications of Love and Happiness *from the pure*

B River

\* Rev. v. 11.

*River of the Waters of Life, clear as Crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb<sup>b</sup>; and they are ever with one harmonious Consent and Voice ascribing Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power unto him who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever<sup>c</sup>. There's not a jarring String, or a silent Tongue, or a cold Heart throughout all the heavenly Choir. The Palace of their God and King resounds with their Joys and Praises; Joys without Measure, and Praises without End. But besides this inconceivably numerous and glorious Assembly of Angels and Saints in Heaven, all composed of dutiful and affectionate Subjects of the Prince of Peace, and the Lord of Glory, there are also here on Earth, even on this guilty Globe, in this Region of Darkness and Misery, this revolted rebellious Part of the divine Creation, a few holy and heaven-born Souls, the Lord make his People a thousand-fold more than they are! that have learnt of *Jesus* as their divine Teacher, that have trusted themselves to him as their all-sufficient Saviour, that have joyfully yielded themselves to him as their rightful and gracious Sovereign, and that are conformed in some good Degree to his holy Example, more and more praying and endeavouring, in a Dependence upon his Grace, *to be changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory<sup>d</sup>.**

As

<sup>b</sup> Rev. xxii. 1.<sup>c</sup> Rev. v. 13.<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

As these holy and heaven-born Souls are scattered over this World as Sheep in a Wilderness, so they, like Sheep, love to collect themselves and associate together; and indeed it is the Will of their great Master, that, as they properly belong to one Fold already, and shall soon be incorporated into one general Society, so they should in their Passage to Heaven, and as a kind of Anticipation of the eternal catholic Communion above, not go single and solitary in their Path to Glory, but travel together in greater or smaller Companies, as Circumstances and Opportunity offer, till they shall all appear before their God in the heavenly *Zion*, where, mingling with the blessed Spirits already in Heaven, they shall form one universal Assembly at their Father's Throne, the Centre of general Attraction, and of their final and everlasting Residence and Felicity.

That these Societies of Saints, these Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, might not want proper Help and Care, he, the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, has appointed Pastors under him *to take the Oversight of his several Flocks*<sup>e</sup>, *to feed them*, in the rich Variety of evangelical Truth and Grace, *with Knowledge and Understanding*<sup>f</sup>, and *to watch over their Souls as those that must give an Account*<sup>g</sup>. And so intent was our Lord Jesus Christ upon a suitable Provision for his People

B 2

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. v. 2.<sup>f</sup> Jer. iii. 15.<sup>g</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.

ple in this respect, and so ready was he to secure an immediate Blessing of this kind after his Departure from our World, that we are assured, *Eph. iv. 8.* that *when he ascended up on high*, when he after the bloody Conflict of his Death, and the public Victory of his Resurrection, returned as a glorious Conqueror to his heavenly Home, *he led Captivity captive*<sup>b</sup>, he made Captives of Sin, Satan, and Death, that had so long and so grievously enslaved our World, and led them as vanquished and chained Prisoners in his triumphal Entrance into Heaven; *and he gave Gifts unto Men*, like as other Conquerors in the Days of their public Glories, for their high Atchievements and Exploits of War, largely distributed their Favours to their Soldiers or Friends<sup>i</sup>, so did *Jesus* the Prince of Life in the Day of his Triumph, when he ascended into Heaven, in richer Blessings bestow his royal Donatives upon his faithful Subjects; and

<sup>b</sup> It is well known that the *Romans* in their Triumphs, to which there seems to be an evident Allusion in the Passage before us, compelled their Captives to make a Part in the Procession; and even Kings, and their royal Progeny, were sometimes thus publicly exposed to increase the Honours of the Day, as in the Triumph of *Paulus Æmilius*, particularly described by *Plutarch*, *Perfes* the King of *Macedon*, and his Children, were led forth as public Spectacles to heighten the Glory of the triumphal Show. Vid. *Plutarch. in Vita Æmiliij.*

<sup>i</sup> Solent Principes dum triumphant, magna Munera & Pecunias in Populum spargere, sic fecit & Christus. Zanch. in loc.

Allusione facta ad morem inter Romanos usitatum, qui hostibus devictis triumphantes Urbem inveciti, non tantum Captivos post se ducebant, sed & Dona & Munera in Vulgus spargere solebant. Limborch. Theolog. lib. 3. cap. 25. §. 2.

and he gave some *Apostles*, and some *Prophets*, and some *Evangelists*, and some *Pastors* and *Teachers*<sup>k</sup>; some for extraordinary, and therefore temporary, and some for more usual, and therefore stated Service; and all with these Views, *for the perfecting of the Saints*, for the settling and compacting his Saints in the closest Bands of Holiness and Affection; *for the Work of the Ministry*, that a Succession of holy and qualified Persons might be raised up for that important Service; and *for the edifying of the Body of Christ*, that his Church might

<sup>k</sup> *Apostles* were our Lord's chief Ministers, and special Witnesses, as having seen him after his Resurrection, and received their Commission immediately from himself, and being endowed with Privileges, as we may conceive, peculiar to themselves. *Prophets* may be such Persons in the Church as were divinely inspired to interpret Scripture, and particularly to explain the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and shew how they had their full Accomplishment in our Lord Jesus Christ; and we may suppose further, that they could foretell Things to come under an immediate Inspiration. *Evangelists* might be Persons who were appointed to travel from Place to Place, and to fulfil such particular Commissions as the Apostles should give, in settling and establishing the Churches they had planted, (Acts xix. 22.) being furnished with such miraculous Powers as were necessary for that Purpose. It is added, and *some Pastors and Teachers*, by which we may understand the same Office, that of feeding, watching over, and instructing the Churches, as the Apostle does not say *some Pastors* and *some Teachers*, in the same *distinctive* Form, as he speaks with regard to extraordinary Officers. Or, if we must admit a Difference, *Teachers* may be *Assistants* to the Pastors, in like manner as we may suppose the *Evangelists* were to the *Apostles*; and accordingly Dr. *Guyse* in his Paraphrase upon this Passage, says, referring to the *Teachers* mentioned, "He, that is  
" Christ, graciously appointed other Ministers of the Gospel  
" at large, to be employed in various Churches and Congre-  
" gations, as Occasions might require, though not with full  
" Power to execute all the Parts of the pastoral Office."



might grow in Gifts and Graces, might be daily rising and tending to a *manly* Perfection, and might, like an healthy and vigorous Body, feel the Springs of Life strengthening and enlivening its whole Frame, to the Glory of its Head and Author, and its own unspeakable Honour and Joy<sup>1</sup>; *till we all come, adds the Apostle, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

But, my Friends, though Christ has thus provided for his People, and, as he at first gave Gifts unto Men, in like manner still continues to shower down from his own inexhaustible Fulness the same Blessings upon his Churches, I mean, the Qualifications and Furniture needful for the ministerial Office, yet as there were many Priests under the Law, so there are many Ministers under the Gospel,

<sup>1</sup> I have followed our *English* Version in the Exposition I have given of this 12th Verse; but I own that there is another View of the Passage that Dr. *Marshall* (see his Sermon on the Place) has given, which conveys an excellent Sense, and seems better to secure the Coherence and easy Order of the several Parts of the Passage, Πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργα διακονίας; εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, for the fitting out holy Persons to the Work of the Ministry to the edifying of the Body of Christ, or, according to the *Ethiopic* Version, *that holy Persons may be confirmed for the Work of the Ministry for the Edification of the Body of Christ.* Can I help observing, that they who design the Work of the Ministry ought from hence to be excited to examine well their Views, and Temper, since holy Persons are such as are the Persons qualified for the sacred Office; and would to God that none but such ever ventured to minister in holy Things! This would be well not only for others, but also for themselves.

Gospel, and that because they are not suffered to continue by reason of Death<sup>m</sup>. You of this Church see, as it were, your aged Pastor, who has for so many Years, and with so much Reputation and Success laboured among you, like a setting Sun; and though, blessed be God, at Evening-time, in the best Sense at least, it is Light with him, and therefore Light with you, yet it is retiring and departing, and, as to you, dying Light, and you cannot but expect, amidst his growing Infirmities, an approaching Removal,

*He stands, but with his starry Pinions on,  
Drest for the Flight, and ready to be gone<sup>n</sup>.*

And I doubt not but this Consideration, together with that of the uncertain Health, and frequent bodily Complaints of his worthy Son, for so many happy and harmonious Years joined in the Work of the Ministry with his venerable Father, have induced you to look abroad for present necessary Help, and a timely Provision for a future Vacany. Will then one of your Number be pleased to give some Account of the Steps, which you, as a Church, have taken, and of the Reasons which have led you to fix your Choice upon my reverend and much-esteemed Brother Mr. *John Stafford* for a Joint-pastorship over you in the Lord.

*Here*

<sup>m</sup> Heb. vii. 23.  
*Howe.*

<sup>n</sup> Dr. *Watts* on the Rev. Mr. *John*

*Here a Deacon of the Church rose up, and declared as follows.*

“ We for some Time have been deeply  
 “ affected with the growing Infirmities of  
 “ our aged and reverend Pastor, and with  
 “ the uncertain Health, and uncommonly  
 “ afflictive and suddenly returning Disorders  
 “ of the Rev. Mr. *William Guyse* his Son,  
 “ who assists him in the Ministry, Circum-  
 “ stances which absolutely forbad his com-  
 “ plying with the united Desires, and repeat-  
 “ ed Applications of the Church to engage  
 “ him to be joined in the pastoral Office with  
 “ the Doctor. This greatly discouraged our  
 “ Hopes of being comfortably settled before  
 “ the Decease of our present worthy Pastor,  
 “ which his Heart was very much set upon,  
 “ and whose Ministry we have enjoyed up-  
 “ wards of thirty Years, and, thro’ the good  
 “ Hand of our God upon us, we have all  
 “ that Time been preserved in Peace and  
 “ Unity, under his wise and prudent Con-  
 “ duct, and he has been greatly blessed among  
 “ us in raising the Church to its present State,  
 “ now including only nine Members of those  
 “ who called him to the pastoral Office among  
 “ us ; which large Increase will, we trust,  
 “ be his Joy and Crown of rejoicing in the  
 “ Day of the Lord *Jesus*.

“ The Rev. Mr. *Stafford* having occa-  
 “ sionally preached to us two or three Lord’s-  
 “ days, with good Acceptance, the Thoughts  
 “ of

“ of many of our Members were turned to-  
 “ wards him, as likely to answer our Views  
 “ for a Co-pastor with the Doctor; upon  
 “ which, at a large Meeting of the Brethren  
 “ it was agreed, that, for further Trial of his  
 “ ministerial Gifts, he should be desired to  
 “ preach once at least every Lord’s-day for  
 “ two Months; and when we had heard him  
 “ about fourteen Sermons in all, we were  
 “ more and more apprehensive that God had  
 “ formed him for the Duties of the Co-  
 “ pastorship; and being fully satisfied as to  
 “ his moral Character upon the closest En-  
 “ quiry, and the most honourable Testi-  
 “ mony to it distinctly given by each of  
 “ his three reverend academical Tutors, we,  
 “ after several Meetings of Prayer to the  
 “ Lord for Direction, proceeded to call him  
 “ to that Office, and also to assist the Doctor  
 “ and his Son in their public Ministrations,  
 “ as Occasion may require: which Call, af-  
 “ ter due Deliberation, and looking up to  
 “ God to show him the Way of Duty, Mr.  
 “ *Stafford* declared his Acceptance of, and  
 “ became a Member with us to our abun-  
 “ dant Satisfaction. We therefore appointed  
 “ this Day for the solemn Separation of him  
 “ to the Service of this Church, in order to  
 “ which we have desired the Assistance of  
 “ the reverend Pastors here present, and the  
 “ Concurrence of two Messengers from their  
 “ respective Churches, to be Witnesses of our

“ Faith and Order, earnestly begging their  
 “ united Prayers with ours for the Blessing  
 “ of the Lord, and that in particular a dou-  
 “ ble Portion of his Spirit may rest upon the  
 “ Rev. Mr. *Stafford*, that he may be still  
 “ more abundantly furnished with Gifts and  
 “ Graces to fill up the important Station to  
 “ which he is called, and that God would  
 “ be pleased to set his own Seal to his Mini-  
 “ stry by his frequent calling in of Sinners,  
 “ and by daily building up his Saints in Faith  
 “ and Holiness, together with the other holy  
 “ Ministrations we have long with rich Ad-  
 “ vantage enjoyed, and which we hope, by  
 “ the Blessing of God, will be many Years  
 “ continued among us.

“ And we further add, that our Hearts  
 “ Desire and Prayer to God are that we may  
 “ be preserved in cordial Love to, and warm  
 “ Affection for each other, till we all come  
 “ to the general Assembly and Church of the  
 “ First-born which are written in Heaven,  
 “ and may be for ever with the Lord to be-  
 “ hold him in all his Glory.”

Upon this Declaration from the Deacon  
 of the Church, Mr. *Gibbons* addressed him-  
 self to the Church with a Desire that they  
 would recognize their Call of the Rev. Mr.  
*John Stafford* to the pastoral Office among  
 them, and to signify it by holding up their  
 Hands.

*Which was accordingly done.*

After

After which Mr. *Gibbons*, turning to Mr. *Stafford*, desired him to give an Account of the Views in which the Call to the Co-pastorship appeared to him, as well as of the Result of his Thoughts concerning the Call.

*Upon which Mr. Stafford replied as follows.*

“ About the Time I first received the Call of  
 “ this Church, I was under some peculiar and  
 “ very pressing Discouragements with respect  
 “ to my Right to engage in the Work of the  
 “ Ministry, upon which I thought it my  
 “ Duty by earnest Prayer and Supplication to  
 “ seek some special Direction of God in an  
 “ Affair so weighty and important. And that  
 “ herein I might not be altogether without  
 “ Success, I earnestly requested some of my  
 “ Friends to use on my Behalf their Interest  
 “ at the Throne of Grace; and I trust that  
 “ a deep Sense of my own Unworthiness of,  
 “ and great Unfitness for the Work to which  
 “ I was then called, had an happy Tendency  
 “ to make me the more importunate with  
 “ God that I might be well assured which was  
 “ the Path of Duty, both with respect to the  
 “ Nature of the Work, and also as to the  
 “ Place in which I was called to labour.

“ And I cannot but hope that it was in  
 “ Answer to the many fervent Prayers offered  
 “ on this Occasion, that my Mind by degrees  
 “ was not only in the general inclined to en-  
 “ gage in ministerial Service, but also in the  
 “ stated Work of the Ministry in this Place:

“ and my Reasons for this Inclination were  
 “ not merely taken from any particular Inti-  
 “ mations of Providence in my Favour, nor  
 “ wholly from the strong and striking Proofs  
 “ of the tender Regards of this Church to  
 “ me, but from a serious Recollection of those  
 “ Encouragements with which I was favour-  
 “ ed either before I entered upon, or during  
 “ a preparatory Course of Study, as also from  
 “ some very kind and gracious Intimations  
 “ of the divine Pleasure, which were afford-  
 “ ed to direct me on this solemn Occasion.  
 “ And I was at the same time further en-  
 “ couraged from the Consideration of my  
 “ Motives herein, which, upon the most  
 “ strict and impartial Examination, were as  
 “ I then hoped, and as I humbly trust still  
 “ are, directed to the Glory of God, the Ho-  
 “ nour of the great Redeemer, a sincere Love  
 “ to his Cause in the World, and a tender  
 “ Concern for the Welfare of precious Souls.  
 “ Hence with a View to follow the Voice  
 “ of Providence, in a Compliance with a  
 “ full Conviction of Duty, with a deep Sense  
 “ of my own Weakness, and yet with a firm  
 “ Dependence upon divine Grace I signified  
 “ my Acceptance of the Call of this Church,  
 “ which I do now publicly recognize in the  
 “ Presence of God, and before this religious  
 “ Assembly. And I humbly engage, in the  
 “ Name and in the Strength of the Lord,  
 “ to discharge, to the best of my Capacity,  
 “ the

“ the great Trust which is this Day com-  
 “ mitted to me, and for this Purpose I de-  
 “ vote myself in a peculiar and special Man-  
 “ ner to the Service of this Church, to exe-  
 “ cute in Conjunction with their reverend  
 “ and venerable Pastor, and my honoured  
 “ Father in the Ministry, all the Parts of the  
 “ Co-pastoral Office, according to the Rules  
 “ laid down in the Word of God ; and I  
 “ further cheerfully engage, as God shall en-  
 “ able me, constantly to assist, as Occasion  
 “ shall require, both him, and their other  
 “ Minister, his reverend and worthy Son, in  
 “ the Work of public Ministrations.

“ And for these Purposes I earnestly de-  
 “ fire a particular Interest in the solemn Sup-  
 “ plications of this Day, and more especially  
 “ in the continual Prayers of this Church,  
 “ that the Presence of God may be with me,  
 “ and that a divine Blessing may attend every  
 “ such Ministration.”

Mr. Stafford *having ended his Account con-  
 cerning his Views of the Call, and having thus  
 recognized his Acceptance of it, Mr. Gibbons  
 proceeded.*

As, Sir, ardent and united Prayer for you  
 will be a principal Part, and that with very  
 great Reason, of the Work of this Day, and  
 as Prayer is never likely to ascend with such  
 Importunity and Fervor, as when we have  
 not the least Doubt or Wavering in any Re-  
 spect as to the Subject of our Petition, will  
 you



you be pleased to give some Account to the Ministers and Messengers here assembled of the Doctrines which you believe, and which you design in a Dependence upon divine Influences to dispense in your future Ministrations.

*Here Mr. Stafford delivered the Confession of his Faith, which is here subjoined, upon the Conclusion of which Mr. Gibbons added ;*

May the sacred and important, the gracious and awful Truths you have now, my dear Brother, delivered, be first felt upon your own Heart, and in their experimental Sense and Savour be preached to others ! May they, like the Sun, at once convey Light and Life ! May you be strong in the Grace which is in Christ Jesus ! May you be made eminently useful in this Church for building it up in Faith and Holiness, and multiplying it with a large Accession of Converts, and true Believers in Jesus Christ ! May the Spirit of a departing Prophet be poured out upon the Head and Heart of you the young Partner of his Labours, and, might it please Heaven so remarkably to bless you, the Heir to the Fulness of his Soul ! In a Word, may the solemn Transactions of this Day be owned by God with his signal Mercy, and may the happy Effects arising thence to you, my Brother, and to this Church, diffuse themselves through Life and Death, and even Eternity itself in a full and uninterrupted Series of divine Joys and Blessings !

## A

## CONFESSION of FAITH.

**I**T hath pleased the Father of Mercies to erect and maintain a Church in our World, and for these Purposes he hath in all Ages separated some for the Work of the Ministry. I esteem it an high Honour, that I have any reason to conclude\*, that *unto me who am less than the least of all Saints, this Grace is given.*

And, as I trust, the divine Hand has directed me to stated Work in this Church of Christ, I desire humbly to give God the Glory, whilst I cheerfully comply with your very reasonable Request, in making a solemn and public Profession of what I believe to be Doctrines according to Godliness, and which, by divine Grace, I am fully determin'd to make the Subject-matter of my future Ministrations: to this Work I shall immediately address myself.

I am very sensible, that all our Apprehensions of divine Things at best are very imperfect: such is the Darkeness of our Understandings,

\* Eph. iii. 8.

standings, and such the Sublimity of spiritual Objects, that we do well to acknowledge <sup>b</sup>, *that we know but in part, and that we see but, as thro' a Glass, darkly.*

Nevertheless, since divine Wisdom has made many great and gracious Discoveries in the holy Scriptures, to these I desire to pay a most sacred Regard <sup>c</sup>, *as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place.*

1. For although something may be known of God by the Works of his Hands, yet I am fully persuaded, that the Words of his Lips, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the only and the perfect Rule to lead us to the saving Knowledge and complete Enjoyment of him.

And therefore whatever appears to be contain'd in these holy Scriptures, either expressly or by necessary Consequence, however contrary to corrupt Nature, or how much soever above the Reach of deprav'd Reason, I desire to receive it as the infallible Word of God, with the utmost Humility and with the deepest Veneration.

From this divine Revelation we are taught to think and to speak in a becoming manner of the Great God, who is unoriginated and independent, whose Nature and Perfections are unsearchable.

2. Upon the Authority of this sacred Volume I firmly believe that, although there is  
but

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Pet. i. 19.

but one God, yet that in this Unity of the divine Nature there are three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are not three Gods, but one God, not one Person, but three Persons, not merely three Characters, or distinct Names of one and the same Person acting under different Dispensations, but three distinct, three divine Persons in the same Unity of Essence; and that these three are the same in their Nature, and are <sup>d</sup> equal as to their incommunicable and divine Perfections; whence I infer, that the *three* <sup>e</sup> *who bear record in Heaven*, are, considered essentially, the one God, the only Object of our Faith and Worship.

This is an inscrutable, an inconceivable Mystery, but, since it is most fully and expressly declar'd in the holy Scriptures, and therein represented as of the greatest and most essential Importance in the whole Scheme of Salvation, I most firmly believe it; and herein desire humbly to adore what I cannot fully comprehend, for <sup>f</sup> *who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto Perfection?*

3. As this one eternal Jehovah never begun to exist, so he never was unresolv'd as to what he would do; and therefore I believe, that God from all Eternity, by a most free, wise, absolute, and unchangeable Decree, for his

<sup>d</sup> Phil. ii. 6.

<sup>e</sup> 1 John v. 7.

<sup>f</sup> Job xi. 7.

own Glory has infallibly fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass<sup>g</sup>, yet so as that human Liberty is not in the least infring'd on the one hand, nor are his own glorious Attributes fully'd or tarnish'd on the other.

To suppose that God from all Eternity, by an Act of his Understanding, did not fore-know all Events which do happen in Time, is to reflect upon him whose <sup>h</sup> *Understanding is infinite*; and to suppose that he could not, by an Act of his Will, infallibly decree them, without the above Absurdities, is to *limit his Power*<sup>i</sup>, neither of which can be granted; wherefore I conclude, that although the Decrees give a Certainty, yet as they give no actual Existence to any Event, God cannot from hence be charged as the Author of Sin.

4. I believe that God in his eternal Purpose determin'd to create Angels and Men, and also to permit Sin to enter into our World, that he might display<sup>k</sup> the Riches of his Grace and Mercy towards a<sup>l</sup> Remnant of his fallen Creatures; and by the same Act of his sovereign Will, I believe that God<sup>m</sup> *the Father chose in Christ* a<sup>n</sup> certain Number of the fallen<sup>o</sup> Race of Mankind to everlasting Happiness and Glory; not on account of any previous Qualifications, or any Excellency above others

<sup>g</sup> Eph. i. 11.

<sup>h</sup> Ps. cxlvii. 5.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. lxxviii.

41. <sup>k</sup> Rom. ix. 23.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. xi. 5.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. i.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 10.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. ix. 23.

others foreseen in them, but merely <sup>p</sup> *according to the good Pleasure of his Will, to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace.*

I believe that as the End was thus settled, so also that all the Means necessary to their Arrival at that End were as firmly determin'd. That as to the rest of the human Race, all having by Sin forfeited his Favour, GOD according to his sovereign Will, and in full Conformity to his strict Justice<sup>s</sup>, hath left them to receive the due Reward of their Iniquity.

5. Further, I believe that GOD the Father provided for the Salvation of his Elect by the Settlements of the eternal Covenant of Grace, in which the LORD Jesus Christ was consider'd as the <sup>r</sup> Head of the chosen Remnant, the Mediator, Advocate, and Surety of his People; that as such he undertook to fulfil all the Conditions of this Covenant; that the Father engag'd to anoint him for, to assist him in, and to carry him through all his great Undertakings, upon which, as a public Person, he should be discharg'd, and that by his receiving as Mediator, *i. e.* in that complex View of his Person GOD-MAN, a great and peculiar Tribute of Praise<sup>s</sup>, he should be highly rewarded for his voluntary and meritorious Obedience.

Thus the <sup>r</sup> *Counsel of Peace was between<sup>s</sup> them both*, by which Counsel,<sup>s</sup> and in which

D 2

Cove-

<sup>p</sup> Eph. i. 5, 6.  
i. 9. and Tit. i. 2.

<sup>s</sup> Rev. xiii. 8. and xvii. 8.  
<sup>r</sup> Rev. v. 12.

<sup>r</sup> 2 Tim.  
<sup>s</sup> Zech. vi. 13.

Covenant Christ <sup>u</sup> *was set up from everlasting.*

6. In pursuance of this eternal Plan I believe that in the Beginning of Time, God, Father, Son, and Spirit, created all Things out of nothing, by the Word of his Power : <sup>w</sup> *he spake and it was done, he commanded* and all Things sprang forth into Being ; and I am as firmly persuaded that all created Existence is not only derived from, but that it is also upheld by the same powerful Influence.

I believe that the Almighty Creator concerns himself even with those Events, which to us are the most contingent and accidental ; that all second Causes are under his unerring Direction ; <sup>x</sup> *that not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without his notice* ; that, as he has fixed, so he also <sup>y</sup> *settles the Bounds of our Habitations* ; that the Number <sup>z</sup> *of our Months is with him* ; that the <sup>a</sup> *Hearts of all intelligent Creatures are subject to his Purpose* ; and that altho' such act freely <sup>b</sup>, yet that they are 'so influenced by his Providence as to effect nothing, but what he had in his all-wise Counsel determin'd should be accomplished, whether by Necessity, free Agency, or Contingency.

7. I believe that, after all his other Creatures, God created Man in his own Image, yet mutable ; that he entered into a Covenant of Works with *Adam*, as the <sup>c</sup> *Head of all those*

<sup>u</sup> Prov. viii. 23.

<sup>w</sup> Pf. xxxiii. 9.

<sup>x</sup> Mat. x. 29.

<sup>y</sup> Acts xvii. 26.

<sup>z</sup> Job xiv. 5.

<sup>a</sup> Prov. xxi. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 23.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. v. 14.

those who were to descend from him by ordinary Generation ; that it was properly a Covenant<sup>d</sup>, having in it every thing necessary thereunto, or included therein ; as particularly its distinct contracting Parties, God and Man ; its Condition, perfect Obedience ; its Promise, immortal Life ; its Threatening, eternal Death ; as also the mutual Agreement<sup>e</sup> in God's giving him such a Revelation in the Form of a Covenant, and in his accepting<sup>f</sup> and receiving it as such. Further, I believe, that this Covenant was holy, equitable, just, and good ; holy, because it required perfect Obedience ; equitable, because it promis'd as much as it threaten'd ; just, as its Demands were suited to Man's Ability ; and good, as it was furnish'd with all valuable Blessings.

Hence, Man had no Right to refuse this Covenant, nor indeed could he, consistent with his Purity, in the least entertain a Thought of so doing, since even this would have been acting contrary to the Rectitude of his Nature, and opposing the divine Will of his Creator, and therefore breaking the Law of his Creation.

8. I believe that, though *Adam* had sufficient Power and Ability to fulfil the Conditions of this Covenant, yet that being left to the Freedom, and Mutability of his own Will, he broke it, not as a private, but as a public

<sup>d</sup> Hof vi. 7. comp. Job xxxi. 33.  
<sup>f</sup> Gen. iii. 1, 2.

<sup>e</sup> Gen. ii. 16, 17.



public Person : and thus <sup>a</sup> *by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men, seeing in one all have sinned.*

By this Apostacy, *Adam*, and we in him <sup>b</sup> *were constituted Sinners*, guilty, and therefore expos'd to all the Evils threatened, such as Death temporal, spiritual, and eternal <sup>c</sup>. And not only is the Guilt of this Sin righteously imputed to us, but we also derive from thence a corrupt Nature, whereby we are averse to all good, and prone to all evil. *Our* <sup>k</sup> *first Father hath sinned*, and we all, as descending from him, *were shapen in Iniquity* <sup>l</sup>, and *conceiv'd in Sin*. — Hence every Faculty of the Soul is sadly deprav'd, the Understanding darkened, the Will captivated, the Affections enslav'd, and the Conscience defil'd; all Communion with God is lost, and Death and everlasting Misery would have ensued, to prevent which with respect to his own People,

9. I believe, that the eternal God, in the Person of the Son, became incarnate; that he did this by taking into Union with his divine Person a truly human Body, and a reasonable Soul, *so that God* <sup>m</sup> *was manifest in the Flesh*, and hereby he became properly qualified for his great Undertakings; for being Man he was capable to suffer, and being God

<sup>a</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>b</sup> 19.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. v. 18, 21.

<sup>k</sup> If.

xlili. 27.

<sup>l</sup> Ps. li. 5.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

GOD he was able to satisfy ; or he was made Man, that *he* " *might have somewhat to offer* ; and as originally he was GOD, he thereby gave an infinite Dignity and Value to his Sacrifice °.

10. In all that Christ did and suffered, I firmly believe, that he acted not only as our Example, but also as the public Head, Representative, and Surety of his People ; that as such he was made under that very Law which we had broken ; that he perfectly fulfill'd it, not for himself, but in the Room and Stead of those whom he represented ; that in this Character *he* <sup>p</sup> *wrought out, and brought in an everlasting Righteousness* ; that for this Purpose his Nature was holy, being a new and supernatural Production, and so not under *Adam's* Covenant, and that his Life was blameless and unspotted, being *holy, harmless, and separate from Sinners*.

11. I believe that the LORD Jesus Christ not only obey'd and fulfill'd the Precept of the Law, but that he also suffered its Penalty ; that when he did so, he was consider'd as the Surety and Substitute of his chosen People ; that for this very reason our Sins were imputed to him : *the* <sup>a</sup> *Lord laid on him the Iniquities of us all ; he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities, the Chastisement of our Peace*  
was

<sup>n</sup> Heb. viii. 3.  
24.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Dan. ix.

<sup>a</sup> If. liii. 5, 6, 7.

*was upon him, when for the Transgression of his People he was stricken; he <sup>r</sup> who knew no Sin was made Sin for us; he was esteem'd by the Law and Justice of GOD as the Sinner's Surety; hence he <sup>s</sup> bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree; he was numbred <sup>t</sup> with the Transgressors, and he bare the Sin of many, and therefore was made a Curse for us <sup>u</sup>.*

12. I believe, that Christ by his Sufferings and Death made an Atonement for Sin, that he did this by enduring the very Punishment with regard to its Nature, and the Whole with respect to its Degree which we had deserved, the Punishment of Loss, and the Punishment of Sense; the Punishment of Loss in his being forsaken of GOD, so as to derive no Comfort for a time from his Interest in him; the Punishment of Sense when the Sword <sup>v</sup> of Justice was call'd forth against him, *when the Shepherd was smitten, and the Sheep were scattered.*

So that he suffered in his Soul as well as in his Body; he was not only afflicted by Men, and tempted by Devils, but was *also smitten of GOD: it <sup>x</sup> pleased the Lord to bruise him, he also put him to Grief, when he made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and cried out, my <sup>y</sup> Soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto Death; my <sup>z</sup> GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?*

13.

<sup>r</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.<sup>u</sup> Gal. iii. 13.<sup>y</sup> Mat. xxvi. 38.<sup>s</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 24.<sup>v</sup> Zech. xiii. 7.<sup>z</sup> xxvii. 46.<sup>t</sup> Is. liii. 12.<sup>x</sup> Is. liii. 10.

13. Further I believe that Christ by his Atonement has made a proper and full Satisfaction; that this Atonement became satisfactory, because infinite, and therefore adequate to the high Demands of divine Justice; that there was no need of an Acceptilation (as some term it) on the Part of the Father to make this Sacrifice a sufficient Price of Redemption, because in itself <sup>a</sup> it was equal to the Dishonour sustain'd, equivalent to the Punishment deserv'd, and really worthy of all the Blessings purchased and promis'd; and thus being in all respects plenary, it became satisfactory. Nevertheless, the Grace of the Father appears in the Gift of his Son, and in his accepting on the Behalf of his People whatever Christ did and suffered.

And further, I firmly believe that, altho' the Death of Christ hath in it a sufficient Value to have compensated for the Sins of every Individual of Mankind, yet that it was paid as a *Ransom* <sup>b</sup> for those only who are eventually sav'd; so that the saving Benefits of his Death are extended no further than to the Elect, for whom they were intended by the Father, purchas'd by the Son <sup>c</sup>; and to whom they either are, or shall be, applied by the Holy Spirit. And therefore to suppose that others are put into a salvable State, is, I apprehend,

<sup>a</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xx. 28.

<sup>c</sup> John x. 15.

prehend, inconsistent with the whole Scheme of Salvation by the LORD Jesus Christ.

14. I believe that the Death of Christ was real, consisting in the Separation of his Soul from his Body, that he remain'd in the State of the Dead until the third Day, *where he saw<sup>a</sup> no Corruption, that he was declar'd<sup>c</sup> to be the Son of GOD with Power by his Resurrection*, that hereupon he was *justified<sup>f</sup> in the Spirit*, as the Covenant-head and Redeemer of his Elect, and that by virtue of this federal Union, which subsisted from all Eternity between the Head and the Members, the whole Church, as a collective Body, was then justified in him<sup>g</sup>, and that this is the true Foundation of all subsequent Blessings and gracious Operations.

Further, I believe, that our blessed LORD, *after forty Days<sup>b</sup> Continuance on Earth, in which time he shewed himself to his chosen Apostles by many infallible Proofs, speaking of the Things pertaining to the Affairs of his Kingdom, ascended into Heaven*, where he ever lives, and appears in those Characters he sustain'd when on Earth, as Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church.

15. I believe, that as the Result of what Christ has done and suffer'd, all that shall be eventually sav'd are in Time personally justified

<sup>a</sup> Acts. ii. 31.

<sup>b</sup> 16.

<sup>c</sup> 3, 11.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. i. 4.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. iv. 25. and Eph. ii. 6.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Tim.

<sup>h</sup> Acts

fied <sup>i</sup> by an Act of God the Father, which consists in his freely pardoning, and fully <sup>k</sup> accepting every believing Sinner as righteous in his Sight, not on the account of any thing attempted by them, or wrought in them, more particularly, not because of their sincere Endeavours to keep the Law, not because of their Submission to the Method of Grace in the Gospel, not on account of their Faith, either consider'd as an Act, or as an holy Principle, nor merely for the Sake of the Merit of Christ, but out of his free <sup>l</sup> and sovereign Love and Grace, imputing <sup>m</sup> to them, as their sole justifying Righteousness, the very active and passive Obedience of Christ; not indeed as perform'd by them, personally consider'd, but as wrought out for them by him *who <sup>n</sup> is made unto them of God, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.*

16. I believe that our Justification is not gradual, like our Sanctification, but that it is compleated by this one Act of God, and that they who are once justified shall not again come into <sup>o</sup> Condemnation. And further, that such whom God justifies he also adopts into his Family, and dignifies and endowes with all the Privileges <sup>p</sup> of that dear and exalted Relation; and I believe that God al-

E 2

ways

<sup>i</sup> Rom. v. 1.<sup>k</sup> Acts xiii. 39.<sup>l</sup> Rom. iii.

24.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. iv. 6, and iii. 22.<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor.

i. 30.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. viii. 1,<sup>p</sup> 1 John iii.

1, 2.

ways acts consistent with the Character of a tender Father, and though in subsequent Dispensations he may sorely afflict and correct them, it is not out of any Hatred to their Persons<sup>a</sup>, nor to satisfy his vindictive Justice, but to discover his Abhorrence of Sin, to display the Glories of his own Holiness, and to promote their Conformity thereunto in their progressive Sanctification<sup>r</sup>.

17. I believe, that whom God justifies he at the same time renews by his Holy Spirit; and that this amazing Change is accomplished by no less than *the exceeding Greatness of that Power which raised Christ from the dead*; that this mighty Work of the Spirit of God consists not merely in enlightening the Understanding<sup>t</sup>, but in the renewing every Faculty of the Soul<sup>u</sup>, whereby the Subject is capacitated for spiritual and supernatural Acts, such as *Repentance towards God, and Faith in the LORD Jesus Christ*<sup>w</sup>; that they who are favour'd with the Implantation of this new and living Principle, (in which they are wholly passive)<sup>x</sup> are by the same gracious and holy Spirit effectually called out of a State of *Darkness into marvellous Light*<sup>y</sup>, wherein they actually renounce and forsake all Self-dependence, fly for Refuge to lay hold of the Hope set before them<sup>z</sup>, and make a willing Surrender

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xii. 7, 8.

<sup>r</sup> Heb. xii. 10.

<sup>s</sup> Eph.

i: 19, 20.

<sup>t</sup> Ez. xxxvi. 26.

<sup>u</sup> Eph. iv. 23.

<sup>w</sup> Acts xx. 20.

<sup>x</sup> Eph. ii. 1.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.

<sup>z</sup> Heb. vi. 18.

Surrender of themselves, and all their Powers to the Service of their Redeemer.

And I further believe that this Grace becomes effectual to these Ends, because it is irresistible, and that its Subjects herein are free, because sweetly inclin'd, and *made willing in the Day of GOD's Power*<sup>a</sup>.

18. They whom the Holy Ghost has thus regenerated he gradually sanctifies, frees them from the reigning Power and *Dominion of Sin*<sup>b</sup>, leads them to view the eternal Law of GOD as their Rule, and shews them that it is the indispensable Duty of all *who have believed, to be careful to maintain GOOD WORKS*<sup>c</sup>; which, though they have no causal Influence in our Salvation, yet are necessary as they bring much Glory to GOD, and as they are evidential of the Truth of that Grace from which they flow.

19. I believe that all they who have been thus regenerated and sanctified, shall never finally fall away; that they being *the Sheep of Christ, shall never be plucked out of his Hands*<sup>d</sup>, but that being *kept by the Power of GOD through Faith unto Salvation*<sup>e</sup>, *they shall persevere to the End, and shall be*<sup>f</sup> *eternally saved*.

True Believers, I am firmly persuaded, shall neither totally nor finally fall from Christ, because

<sup>a</sup> Ps. cx. 3.  
<sup>d</sup> John x. 28.  
13.

<sup>b</sup> Rom. vi. 14.  
<sup>e</sup> i Pet. i. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Tit. iii. 8.  
<sup>f</sup> Matt. xxiv.



because their Perseverance does not depend upon the weak and impotent Will of Man, but upon the *immutable Will*<sup>g</sup>, the *unchangeable Love*<sup>h</sup>, the *almighty Power*<sup>i</sup>, and the *never-failing Faithfulness of God*<sup>k</sup>: it is secur'd by the Death and Intercession<sup>l</sup>, by the Care and Grace of Christ, and it is further confirm'd by the perpetual Indwelling of his Holy Spirit<sup>m</sup>.

20. In order to our Perseverance in Faith and Holiness, it is doubtless our Duty to worship God, as in a private and secret, so also in a public Manner, on all proper Occasions, but especially on the Lord's-day, or first Day of the Week.

For this Purpose, all true Believers should make Conscience of joining together in visible, stated, and social Worship, in some particular Church of Christ, with a View to mutual Edification.

And, by what I am able to collect from the Word of Truth, an imbodyed Society of the Faithful, who for their Number may ordinarily worship together at one Time, and in one Place, with a Desire to walk according to the Rules Christ has in his Word appointed, is, in my Apprehension, a true Gospel-church. A Society thus constituted has within itself a full Power to chuse its own Officers,

<sup>g</sup> John vi. 39.

<sup>h</sup> Mal. iii. 6.

<sup>i</sup> John x.

<sup>29.</sup> <sup>k</sup> Psal. lxxxix. 33.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. viii. 34.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. iv. 30.

Officers, to receive its own own Members, and to exhort and reprove all those who walk disorderly amongst them.

In fine, as this is the Seat of all Church-power, it is incumbent on all such Societies to take all proper Methods to promote and maintain <sup>a</sup> the Faith and Order of the Gospel; and, as it is the true Subject of all Ordinances, to see to it, that the Order which Christ has erected in it, be constantly observ'd, and the Ordinances duly administred, especially the two Sacraments, which are of standing Use in the Church, *viz.* Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

21. I believe, that Baptism is a Seal <sup>o</sup> of the Covenant of Grace, which not only intimates the Necessity of the Person's being sprinkled with the Blood, and cleansed by the Spirit of Christ; but which also signifies our Engrafture into him, to receive Remission of Sins <sup>p</sup>, and to partake of all the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace.

And therefore Believers should testify their Faith in God's holy Covenant, by thus devoting their Infant-seed <sup>q</sup> to him, and by consecrating them in this Ordinance to his Service; that in so doing they may comfortably lay hold of, and believingly plead with God, that rich Variety of precious Promises, by which he has encourag'd their Faith in his  
holy.

<sup>a</sup> Jude 3.  
 39.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. iv. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Luke xviii. 16.

<sup>p</sup> Acts ii. 38.

holy Covenant, viz. *That he will be a God<sup>t</sup> to them, and to their Seed after them; that instead of the Fathers<sup>s</sup>, there shall be the Children; that the same blessed Spirit<sup>t</sup> that is with his People shall not depart from them, nor from their Seed, nor from their Seed's Seed, from henceforth, and for ever.*

22. I believe that our LORD *Jefus Christ, the same Night in which he was betrayed<sup>u</sup>, appointed the other Seal, which is called the Lord's Supper, in which Christ is not again offered up to his Father<sup>w</sup>, nor indeed is there in this Ordinance any real Sacrifice made for Sin<sup>x</sup>, nor is there so much as the least Change made in the Nature of the Elements receiv'd, yet are they consecrated to be the Memorials of Christ's Death, and are to be frequently receiv'd by Believers, and them only<sup>y</sup>, for their spiritual Nourishment and Growth in Grace; and also as a Bond and Pledge of their Communion with Christ, and with one another.*

23. I believe, that after Death the Souls of the Righteous do immediately enter into Glory<sup>z</sup>, that they neither sleep nor die with their Bodies, but that they directly *ascend to God who gave them<sup>a</sup>; that as soon as they are absent from the Body, they are present with the LORD<sup>b</sup>: and indeed, were it not so, we*  
might

<sup>t</sup> Gen. xvii. 7.

<sup>u</sup> Ps. xlv. 16.

<sup>v</sup> If. lix. 21.

<sup>w</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 23.

<sup>x</sup> Heb. ix. 26.

<sup>y</sup> Heb. x. 26.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 29.

<sup>a</sup> Luke xxiii. 43.

<sup>b</sup> Eccl. xii. 7.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Cor. v. 8.

might rather desire to continue here, in the Service of God, than *to depart*, which yet the Apostle assures us, *is far better*<sup>c</sup>. On the other hand, the Souls of the Wicked descend into Hell, where they remain in utter Darkness and exquisite Torture till the Judgment of the great Day.

24. And finally, I believe, that there is a Day coming, wherein God will judge *the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ*<sup>d</sup>; and that in order to his doing this, there shall be a *Resurrection both of the Just and of the Unjust*<sup>e</sup>, each of whom shall receive an impartial Sentence, by which the Wicked shall be doom'd to *everlasting Punishment*<sup>f</sup>, and the Righteous, being acquitted, shall enter into the Joy of their LORD.

These are the principal Heads of Christian Doctrine, all of which I most firmly believe, as being contain'd in the holy Scriptures, and therefore, (as hath been already observ'd) I hope and trust, by the Grace of God, to make these the Subject-matter of my future Ministrations. Thus may I *not shun to declare the whole Counsel of God*<sup>g</sup>.

And to conclude, most sincerely and most earnestly do I beg an Interest in the importunate Supplications of all now present, that at  
the

<sup>c</sup> Phil. i. 23.  
<sup>f</sup> Matt. xxv. 46.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. ii. 10.  
<sup>g</sup> Acts xx. 27.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xxiv. 15.

the End of my Ministry, and at the Close of Life, through divine Grace, I may be able to say with the Apostle <sup>b</sup>,

*I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing.*

<sup>b</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.



T H E

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T H E  
S E R M O N.

**W**HENEVER a gospel-church shall find it expedient to appoint any to sacred office amongst them, they are invested with full power and authority from Christ to separate from among themselves, such as they shall judge properly qualified to serve them in the Lord. Yet it is the practice of our congregational churches, at the setting apart a Brother to pastoral work, to invite Ministers and Messengers of other churches in the same communion, to behold their order, to be witnesses to their faith, and to join issue with them in the solemnities of such a serious and weighty transaction. A laudable and becoming practice this ! — Not that such a ministerial convention is necessary to convey office-power, or render an ordination valid, but it affords a fit occasion for explicitly asserting the communion of churches ; it tends to give them satisfaction concerning the principles and

the spirit of the ordained, and the continued faith and order of the church in which he is call'd to labour ; it serves to confirm the christian affections of his brethren in the ministry to him, and to engage their fervent prayers for him and his charge, at the same time that it gives opportunity for some seasonable, at least some well-meant hints of instruction from the lips of those, whom they think proper to invite to this occasional labour of love to them.

Agreeable to this natural and scriptural plan of proceeding we have been suitably entertain'd with an account of the steps taken, and the inducements exciting to the present choice and settlement ; we have been witnesses to a concise but explicit, and may I not say judicious declaration of our reverend and dear Brother's faith in the great and leading Doctrines of the Gospel ; whereby he has given us all a very pleasing prospect of the continuance of that great privilege to this community, the enjoyment of the clear and wholesome streams of the sanctuary. I express, I am persuaded, not only the language of my own heart, but the hearts of all my reverend Fathers and Brethren, and I trust too of all this numerous assembly, while I add my warmest wishes and hopes that the present addition to the stated ministry in this church may be attended with all desirable blessing and success !

The particular province assign'd me in this day's service is more especially address'd to you (my much esteem'd friends) the members of this large and valuable church of the living God, and permit me to do it with something of the affection and zeal, though short of the authority of the great Apostle.

I. T H E S S. v. 12, 13.

*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

**W**EIGHTY and warming advices! originally directed to the saints at *Thessalonica*. There *Paul* had planted, his son *Timothy* had water'd (ch. iii. 2.) and God had been pleas'd to grant a blessed increase of happy converts to the faith of the gospel. There the Spirit of the Lord had lifted up his standard, and, maugre all the clamorous oppositions of earth and hell, a famous flourishing new testament church was form'd, and furnish'd also with such as stately minister'd to them for their establishment and comfort. This was a church whose faith was firm, whose charity was fervent, and whose profession was uniform, exemplary, and renown'd.

Here



Here was little call for the apostle to reform their creed, or correct their disorders, to argue down their errors in principle, or faithfully remonstrate against their errors in practice; we meet with no mournful lamentations over their apostacies, immoralities, or discords. The design of the epistle seems to be chiefly the commending their graces, the encouraging their hopes, and the strengthening their hands; as also to express his intercessions for them, and the good it did him at heart, amidst all his afflictions and trials, to hear of their eminent advancements in grace, purity, and peace. Pleasant is it to write or minister to a people of such a spirit, and of such attainments! freedom may then be used without reserve, the closest duties urged without offence. And it is worthy our remark, that though this community was so sound in the faith, and so exemplary in their walk, though their harmony was so entire, and their mutual affections so great, though too they were so well provided with stated ministers to admonish and instruct them, yet these things prevented not the apostle's christian freedom and faithfulness: he abounds in the word of exhortation, plentifully guards and cautions against particular sins and mistakes, and vigorously excites to the several material duties of their relation, profession, and calling, as much in this epistle as in any one of equal length thro' the whole new testament. And this to teach  
us,

us, no doubt, these useful lessons, “ that the  
 “ best of saints may need to be caution’d  
 “ against even the worst of sins—that under  
 “ the highest attainments there is room for  
 “ farther improvements—that none, so long  
 “ as they belong to the church militant, are  
 “ to think it needless to be farther arm’d  
 “ against sins and mistakes, and—that, amidst  
 “ the greatest plenty of the constant means  
 “ of instruction, an occasional labour of love  
 “ may, with the divine blessing, be very pro-  
 “ per and useful.” Till I attended to these  
 natural deductions from the instance before  
 us, it was, I own, with particular reluctance I  
 complied with your request in the present ser-  
 vice, but with such a sacred pattern before me  
 I cheerfully and affectionately address myself  
 to the work. — And here it might be useful  
 to some were I to employ the present hour  
 upon the nature and constitution, the privi-  
 leges and immunities of a gospel-church ; to  
 enumerate the wise and salutary laws of God’s  
 house, and shew the necessity and use of main-  
 taining that holy order, strict watch, and faith-  
 ful discipline therein, which are so closely  
 connected with the edification of the body,  
 the purity of the faith, and the glory of Christ.  
 The institution and importance of a stand-  
 ing ministry, the nature, authority and extent  
 of ministerial work, the honour and excel-  
 lency of the sacred character, the degrees  
 and connections of ecclesiastical offices, the  
 true

true seat of church power, and the rights of ordination, are also subjects which have been frequently insisted on at these public occasions. But, as I am directing my discourse to those who have long enjoy'd the richest means of instruction, and are not only in possession of the judicious publications of their dear and venerable Pastor, but have still access to his living mature counsels and advices, I shall decline attempting any thing professedly upon these heads, or indeed on any other, as labour'd for your information; what comes within the limits of my design being principally to give vent to a sincere christian esteem, and my warmest wishes for your continued and increasing prosperity, and this by stirring up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, as to some of those material duties and good offices which you owe to one another, to them who labour among you, and particularly to him who also is now set over you in the Lord. *Nor would I be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be establish'd in the present truth, 2 Pet. i. 12.—We beseech you, brethren; to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Within the compass of which exhortation, we are furnished with an*  
instructive

instructive description of the ministerial character, office, and work. They are persons set over us to admonish us, and labour among us in the Lord. We have also an apostolical directory to a gospel-church how to demean themselves towards their ministers, *viz.* to know them, esteem them, and love them; together with a prescription of the grand expedient in order to a minister's comfort and spirit in his work, and a people's profit and advantage by it; that is to be at peace among themselves.

But as I would not in the least invade the province of my worthy father in the ministry I shall confine our present attention entirely to these two things :

I. I would attempt a little to explain and recommend the duties which a church owe to their spiritual guides.

II. Give some short representation of the strict connection there is between a church's peace, a church's prosperity, and the comfort and usefulness of their ministers among them.

We may close the whole with some seasonable recollections.

I. I am, in some measure, to explain and recommend the several duties a church owe to their spiritual guides and instructors, such I mean as are contain'd in the sacred directory

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before us, *I beseech you, brethren, &c.* These are duties which come cloathed with all the authority of an inspired apostle, but yet are suggested with all the tender condescending language of love unfeigned, the singular rhetoric of christian humility and zeal. The pride of preheminance, and the lust of power swell the instructions of a superior into lordly dictates, while a genuine humility and fervent charity level the language of an apostle (the great apostle of the *Gentiles*) with that of an earnest importunate suppliant. His heart was zealously solicitous for the greatest good of the church to whom he wrote; he well knew how important, how essential to their comfort and well-being, the duties were which he had to enjoin, and how slow human hearts are at receiving due impressions from the most weighty words of instruction; he therefore wisely and kindly unites importunity and intreaty with apostolical authority, thus he engages their hearts, in order to secure their attention, and that, by exemplifying towards them, the very duty he inculcates upon them.

Now what were these duties *Paul* so earnestly urges and tenderly inculcates? These *Thessalonians* were a body of gospel-believers regularly formed into a new testament-church, completely organized according to the wise and gracious institution of Jesus Christ the Lord, and they were provided with such faithful guides and teachers [as his rich wisdom

wisdom and love saw proper for their edification, increase, and growth. And how greatly has the Redeemer display'd his wisdom and love, while he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, as extraordinary officers, for the first erecting his gospel kingdom in the world; and has no less appointed the ordinary and abiding offices of *pastors and teachers, for the perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, &c.* Eph. iv. 12.

'Tis as if the apostle then had said to the "*Thessalonians*," This, brethren, is the grace  
 " wherein you stand, these the privileges you  
 " possess, thus has your gracious Lord provid-  
 " ed for you; prize your mercies and use them,  
 " overlook not the provision, nor undervalue  
 " the enjoyment; God's good gifts always de-  
 " mand our grateful acknowledgments; what  
 " we receive in a way of free favour, we should  
 " study to make returns for in a way of duty:  
 " God hath given you pastors that you may  
 " know them, esteem them, and love them."

The special duties then which a church of Christ owe to their ministers, and which the apostle is so much in earnest to engage them in the practice of, are these three:

A special and intimate acquaintance with them — an high and kind opinion of them — and a warm active affection for them. —

1. 'Tis the duty of religious communities to cultivate a special and intimate acquaintance with them that are over them in the Lord. *We beseech you, brethren, know, &c.*

To know a person commonly signifies simply to discern or distinguish him from all others; the natural means of such discernment is to see, hear, and freely converse with him, and thus knowledge ripens into acquaintance; and when acquaintance is connected with special relation and personal worth, the profit and pleasure we experience from such connections naturally heightens our knowledge into friendship and endearment. In this fulness of meaning the term is used in the text. It cannot be imagin'd the apostle design'd merely to exhort them to gain a knowledge of the *persons* of the ordained; for whatever has been the practice of later ages, since ecclesiastical offices have been at the direction of civil establishments, and invaded by those whose labour is only the gaining preferment, 'tis certain in these primitive times, the churches of Christ were their own choosers, and such alone were chosen whose characters were well known, and their gifts well approved, and they were such as actually *admonish'd them, and labour'd among them*. The duty therefore of a people's knowing their teachers according to our text, seems evidently to include the knowledge—of their special character and relation—of their office and  
work

work — of their talents and gifts — and of their infirmities and trials too; for we are men subject to like passions, weaknesſes, and discouragements with yourselves, which it is useful for you to know, and a mercy to know by information only.

(1.) 'Tis a people's duty to know those that are over them in the Lord as to their ſpecial character and relation. Miniſters are Chriſt's commiſſion-officers, and they are ſpirited and gifted by him for the ſervice of your ſouls. They are embaffadors or heralds from the prince of peace to publiſh glad tidings, and to diffuſe the royal proclamation of peace on earth, and good-will to men. The Lord has given them a commiſſion to diſpenſe his word, reſerving to himſelf the power of commanding the bleſſing. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man,* 1 Cor. iii. 5.

To know your miniſters in their character then, is to look upon them as Chriſt's commiſſioners, Chriſt's ſervants, Chriſt's wife and gracious proviſion for your conſolation and ſalvation: and the word they diſpenſe, ſo far as it is ſupported by the ſacred oracles, is not to be regarded as the inſtruction of the ſpeaker, but as his inſtruction in whoſe name they ſpeak. Keep your eyes ſteadily on this point in all your public attendances, and it may be expected our goſpel will not come unto you in  
word



word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. — And as to their relation to you, such whom God hath united your choice in for stated work, they are in a peculiar manner his ordinance for your good ; you are to know them as your own, as God's special provision for you. And would ye grow in grace, adorn your profession, and make sensible advancements in the divine life, then know them that labour among you, *i. e.* make conscience of cleaving to their ministry, adhering to their instructions, conversing freely with them, and admitting them freely and faithfully to converse with you concerning the affairs of your precious Souls. Give me leave to exemplify these hints a little. You open your sabbaths with contemplation and prayer, your souls thirst after God, you breathe for a fresh message of grace from him under his word : And is the question with you, where shall I go to-day ? whose ministry shall I attend ? shall I turn in here to the right, or there to the left, and hear what God, by such or such a ministry, shall say to my soul ? No, no ! this indeed is too much the temper and conduct of many, but 'tis a temptation, a weakness. The path of prescribed duty is directly before you, *know them that labour among you* ; rather think of filling up your places than of indulging your fancies ; remember he that plants is not any thing, nor he that waters, but God that

that gives the increase. The blessing is wholly at his disposal, and you have much greater reason to expect it under the ministrations of them he has set over you, than of any others. Know them therefore in your closets by earnest and frequent prayer for them, that they may be furnish'd with a word in season to you ; know them in their christian visits, by a kind reception of all their friendly counsels, and cautions, and reproofs, which faithfulness and affection may occasionally suggest. And know them in the house of God, by a close attention to their public instructions, as containing the particular message, which it was the all-disposing will of God you should at such a time receive from them. In such a temper of mind the word will come cloathed with authority, your ministers will be heard with acceptation, and your hearts cheer'd and refresh'd with the blessing.

(2.) To know your ministers is to have a distinct and proper knowledge of their office and work. *Minister* is the common appellation for all who labour in the word and doctrine, and may be extended to all that bear office in the church. No small debates have indeed arisen among divines upon the subject of church-constitution, and its standing officers, whether the various terms used in scripture on this topic express distinct degrees and orders of men, or whether several of them are not different names for the same office.

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But if we will content ourselves with the plain simple plan form'd upon new-testament direction and precedent, gospel-churches are evidently congregational; they are the distinct colonies of the Saviour's grace, the distinct seats of appointed ordinances, and of that authority and church-power with which the king of *Zion* has invested them to edification, and not destruction. I also apprehend it is sufficiently clear, that, where an embodied society of christians are provided with a grave and worthy presbyter or elder, who as their bishop takes the oversight of them, as their pastor and teacher ministers the word and ordinances to them, and as their (ἡγεμὸν) leader goes before them in the due exercise of spiritual rule and government among them; that where also they have a prudent and active brother or brethren appointed to see to, and discreetly manage the external and temporal affairs of the community for them; I say I apprehend such a community is provided with all that is essential to their edification and well-being. We accordingly meet with particular instructions given in the epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, concerning these two orders of church officers, and no others; and what does this intimate, but that these only are necessary to a church's edification and comfort? Yet it is as fully evident from the same sacred canon that as the pastor's or bishop's work is in itself laborious and of large extent, so where

a church is large and numerous, and where a pastor's age, or other infirmities, may render him incapable fully to discharge the several duties of his function; there is provision made by Christ for his assistance and ease. The churches have a warrant to set apart *teachers* to take a share in public teaching, or *ruling elders* to assist in the rule and discipline of the community. Thus we read of elders ordained in the several churches, *Tit.* i. 5. a plurality of elders in the church at *Ephesus*; *Acts* xx. 28. and that at *Philippi* had its bishops as well as deacons, *Phil.* i. 1. In like manner these *Thessalonians* had more than one, whom they were to esteem and love alike for their common work sake; being colleagues, as should seem, in the same office of presiding, admonishing, and labouring among them.

Some worthy divines and others chuse to refine a little upon this head, by labouring some distinction between the pastor and teaching elder: though they own them to bear the same office for *substance* in the church, yet; as the apostle exhorts, *Rom.* xii. 7. that *they who teach* should attend to their *teaching*, and *they who exhort* on their *exhortation*, 'tis supposed that this difference is to be kept up in their ministrations. The teaching elder is to labour principally in maintaining the truth, and informing the judgment; the pastor to aim at warming the heart, engaging the affections,

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and

and directing the christian's practice and walk :  
 " The one to instruct, that there may be  
 " light and knowledge ; the other to exhort,  
 " that there may be an answerable life and  
 " practice." But as every church has power  
 to study their own edification, there is no  
 shadow of objection against their right to  
 chuse a plurality of pastors as well as deacons,  
 whenever they shall judge it most expedient  
 so to do. This has been the special work of  
 this day. *We therefore beseech you, brethren,*  
 &c. know your aged pastor, and other ju-  
 dicious instructor, as to their continued office  
 and work among you ; know also this our  
 younger brother, whose health and abilities  
 have encouraged you to call him to a joint  
 oversight of you : though younger in years,  
 he too is an elder by office, and as such is to  
 be own'd and adhered to by you ; his rela-  
 tion to you is as near, his charge as solemn,  
 and his office and ministrations are cloathed  
 with the same authority from Christ, as if he  
 had taken the sole inspection of you ; know  
 him therefore in his office, and encourage him  
 in his work.

(3.) To know them that are over you in  
 the Lord is to know them in respect to their  
 talents and abilities, (and for brevity's sake I  
 here add) in respect to their infirmities, dif-  
 ficulties, and discouragements also.

Various and arduous are the several branches  
 of the ministerial and pastoral office ; and,  
 though

though such whom God calls to it are in some good degree furnish'd for the due discharge of its several parts, yet there is a diversity of gifts by the same spirit. Some of Christ's servants excel in one, and some in another branch of their master's work; few are eminent in all. 'Tis exceeding necessary and useful for a people to bear in mind this obvious remark, and also to consider the several circumstances of years, standing, and experience which belong to their ministers respectively. You have had a long and happy knowledge of the abilities, spirit, labours, activity, and usefulness of our dear and aged father in the ministry. How many of you own him with joy as a spiritual father to your souls! You are still to know him, under the sensible burthens of declining years, *when the keepers of the house begin to tremble, and those that look out of the windows are darkened*, Eccl. xii. 3. To expect that vigour, activity, and zealous application in your service, which have been his pleasure and delight, would be strangely to fail in the duty before us, and it would be as great a failure in it not to pay the utmost deference to his mature and endearing counsels and instructions, whenever he has a share of spirits and strength to imploy in your farther service. It is needless I hope to add, that to neglect attendance on any of his ministrations, because he can no longer miss you from your places, is to cease not only to know him,

but to know yourselves, and the most tender of obligations to a steadfastness in your profession.

You have also known, and for many years enjoy'd, the solid instructions of your other valuable teacher. Had his bodily health and spirits been equal to his abilities, and your solicitous desires, there would have been no call for this day's settlement. But, alas! the gospel-treasure is put into earthen vessels, fragil, and infirm, and we are incapable of every service for your souls, but as we are graciously strengthened and animated by the Lord in our work and way. The present settlement will not prevent your farther enjoyment of his useful labours, so often as his precarious Health will permit. Know him therefore by abounding in your prayers for him, and who knows but it may please God so far to repair and strengthen a painful and infirm habit of body, to cheer his spirits, and enlarge his heart in zealous concern for the interest of religion, as to induce him farther to embark hereafter in the work of his Lord and Master.

At the same time know him too, who has been this day encouraged and directed of the Lord willingly to devote himself, and his promising talents to his divine Master's, and your special and immediate service. Know him as now appointed to dispense the word also, and to break the bread of life unto you; make no difference by neglecting his ministrations, though  
younger

younger in the work ; neither expect altogether and at once that ripeness of judgment, that exactness and beauty of composition, that agreeable ease and readiness in public administrations which may be gradually discovered. To know him is to make all proper allowances in these cases, and in all others where a long course of knowledge and experience is necessary to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnish'd to every good work and duty of his station.

Thus I dismiss this most leading and comprehensive branch of the apostle's direction in our text, to which the following are natural and necessary appendages, and may be discuss'd in fewer words.

2. Another article in a church's duty towards their ministers, is to esteem them very highly for their work's sake. This is most closely connected with the former, and flows from it, for where there are worth and suitableness in an object known, they engage and in a sort force our esteem, in proportion to the degree of excellency discern'd ; and where there are propriety and relation connected with intrinsic value, they put an edge upon our friendly sentiments and regards, and thus our good opinions are formed and raised. Now these considerations conspire to raise and fix the highest opinion and esteem for our spiritual guides, for such I mean who obtain mercy to be faithful. Their office you have heard  
is



is high and arduous, their work is to teach us the way of salvation, to watch for our souls as they who must give an account; admonishing, (*ὁ δεικνύς*) bringing to mind, or more fully, as perhaps the word will bear, bringing to a right mind: with sinners their labour is to bring them to themselves, to their right minds concerning their state and their everlasting welfare; with the erroneous or disorderly 'tis to bring them back from the error of their ways, and reduce their minds to better sentiments: and with you all 'tis to confirm you in the knowledge of the truth, to strengthen your faith, enliven your hopes, enlarge your experiences, and to be helpers of your joys. And these services they perform by Christ's gift to you. He has given pastors and teachers. Ministers are the church's property made over and appointed for the service of your faith. *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, &c. all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,* 1 Cor. iii. 22.—Can you read your charter and not esteem the settlement? peruse your father's will, and not prize the donation? conscientious, skilful, faithful pastors are the greatest gift of heaven, next to the gift of the Son for you, and his Spirit in you, therefore ye are call'd to esteem them (*τιμάς*). The term is every forcible and expressive, it conveys the idea of *taking the lead and direction* of others; hence its derivative signifies a captain or governor, and is  
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apply'd to Christ the great captain of salvation, the leader and governor of the people. The same word is used also to express the pastoral office, Heb. xiii. 17. *Obeys them that have the rule over you*, &c. So that the very term seems to instruct us, "That as ministers take the lead in your worship and walk, so a good and high opinion of them is to take the lead in your sentiments and esteem." This is to be the leading governing sentiment, so that if a sight of their common infirmities or failings forces a different thought occasionally upon you, the duty in my text directs to banish all censoriousness and resentment from your breasts, and to recover as soon as may be that habitual leading esteem and regard which are due to them for their work sake.

The temper of mind which is here inculcated bears a special relation to two things — the tenor of the labours performed by them — and to the attacks of malevolence made upon them.

(1.) As to the labours performed by them. Conscientious labourers in the Lord's vineyard will not put their people off with what costs them nothing, but after all our labours, studies, and prayers we cannot command a frame. Ministers have their dark, dry, dead, and unprofitable seasons, both in the study and pulpit, as well as you in your families and closets: when therefore you meet with what is less

less judicious and finished, less profitable and savory, less lively and animated at times in their public performances, having still the truth, though under these occasional disadvantages, remember the duty before us calls for tender sympathy, not severe censure; to redouble your prayers for them, not to brood undue and hasty prejudices against them; this would be to join issue with the confederates of hell, who hate us for our work's sake, while your business is highly to esteem us in love and tenderness for it.

Which brings me to the other thing.

(2.) The temper of mind here recommended bears respect also to the attacks of prejudice and malevolence made upon them. It may seem strange in one view, that so sacred a character, and so good a work, should have any enemies; but in truth ministers, faithful, laborious ministers, are the very butt of hell; of all characters on earth, the enemy hates and maligns that of ministers the most, and it is frequently found that the best of men meet with the worst of usage. *Paul was troubled on every side*, 2 Cor. iv. 8. and *they that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. The persecution of the tongue is often our lot, when God does not deliver into the power of the enemy's hand, and satan is never more pleased than when he can get the tongues of good people into his service; when he can get the tongues of church-members to  
bear

bear fully and fiercely against each other, and especially against their ministers and pastors, when through wrath and prejudice they utter perverse things, and plentifully deal out scandal, detraction, and reproach. O how sweet an entertainment is this to infernal hearts, and how diligently should it be watch'd, and pray'd, and striven against by all that have any heart for God and religion ! Nor are we merely to guard against these things ourselves, but to discountenance them in others ; we do not duly esteem them that labour among us if we can silently and patiently hear them slandered, misrepresented, and abused. But I am persuaded there is little need to enlarge here ; you are too much used to the knowing your ministers and to esteeming them also, which introduces the third article in the advices of our text.

3. To esteem them *very highly in love* for their work's sake. Esteem and love are close companions ; where one takes the lead, the other brings up the rear ; yet they are distinct, and in some degree separable.—Esteem is an act of the judgment, love is found among the warmer passions ; esteem may be speculative and supine, love is practical and operative : so that by this addition to the expression, the sacred penman ascertains the kind of esteem he would inforce, *viz.* not a speculative, languid, lifeless, good opinion, but an active, vigorous, affectionate one, such an

esteem as engages the affections, and produces the genuine fruits of these warmer powers of the soul: we ought to esteem all good ministers; but we are to love our own, so to love them as to take pleasure in performing acts and offices of love for them. There is indeed an extraordinary force and energy in the apostle's expression. Esteem them (*καὶ ἐκ-  
μενεστε*) *very highly in love*, says the translation; *more than abundantly*, i. e. *excessively*, this comes nearest to the original. Real excess indeed, either in our appetites or affections, is in itself an evil, and highly criminal; in this case as great an evil, and as highly criminal as in any other. To have men persons in admiration, so as to justify their misconduct, and be blind to their sins, is beside the duty of the text. For a people to abet their pastor in pride and partiality, as to his rule and government of the church, and carriage towards its members, or to make his office an excuse for practices which deserve to be censured in common members, may have indeed the appearance of excessive love to him, but duly weighed, such conduct shews the want of that love which the text commands, and is the greatest unkindness to him, and injury to themselves, and to the honour and interest of religion, they can well be guilty of.—But these things through mercy you have not been under a temptation to; the exemplary piety, prudence, peaceableness, equity, and tenderness,

with

with which your dear aged pastor has been enabled to walk before you for such a length of years ought never to be forgotten in your solemn thanksgivings before the throne. And there is good reason to hope the same mercy (through a supply of the Spirit of Christ) will be continued to you. If duty and affection to his instructors, integrity and uprightness in his conduct, firmness, evenness of mind and command of his passions under trials, cheerfulness and good temper, kindness and offices of love to equals and inferiors, in a word, if seriousness and circumspection, joined with a conversation becoming the gospel-character and profession, in private life are tokens for good, I am greatly warranted to hope our reverend brother is given as a blessing among you.

Your ministers challenge your love and esteem only so long as they provide things lovely and honest in the sight of all men, *Rom. xii. 17.* so long as they behave becoming their character and holy profession; and such are worthy of your highest regard, your abundant love, and tenderest affection. They are entitled to more than your cold good word and verbal approbation; they are entitled to your sincere and ardent love, your active vigorous efforts for their comfort and peace: and where this christian affection is in due temper and exercise, it will discover itself in an abundance of ways and instances towards

them. Love will engage your kind and candid reception of their labours, a just and proper interpretation of their words and actions, your tender sympathy and prayer under afflictions and trials, and it will shew itself also by a tenderness for their reputation, an openness of hand in their support, an openness of heart in your converses, and by a walk and demeanour in all things answerable to their prayers for you and labours among you, *for now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord, 1 Thess. iii. 8.* Did time allow I should proceed to single out two or three things, wherein the height of a people's love to their pastor is discovered, the fruits of which are most highly salutary and momentous to both him and them. Such is a people's ready and active concurrence with him in those measures which his heart is set upon for their progressive good: meetings for prayer and holy conference, for catechizing and instructing your children, the maintenance of a faithful watch and strict discipline in the house of God, are measures which need a church's countenance and active assistance, and measures which more directly secure a church's peace and prosperity than many are aware of.

A still greater proof, perhaps the greatest, of a people's love to their pastor and themselves, is kindly to receive, and cordially to relish the wholesome reproofs of his faithfulness and love. All that a faithful pastor says  
and

and does is aimed in zeal for his people's good ; his whole office is an office of love, and in all its branches should be so esteem'd ; and one branch is in christian faithfulness to caution and reprove. *Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine* (2 Tim. iv. 2.) is the apostolic charge ; and it is needful for you in the present imperfect state that your ministers should at times in this way *commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 2. A duty delicate in its nature, and difficult to discharge with success ; how skilful the touch that removes the film and restores the sight, without offending the humours and inflaming the eye ! 'Tis therefore a duty we always engage in with reluctance and fear ; as the human mind is imperfectly prepared to receive its discharge kindly at our hands, and as it is always perform'd with a kind of violence to our own affections. But as *in the sight of God* we must reprove and rebuke, we are sure to offend God, if we shrink from our duty lest it offend you. Shew therefore, my christian friends, as fellow-travellers shew constantly, the ardency of your love to your spiritual guides, by suffering, by favouring every close word of exhortation and reproof they may see necessary to give you. If you have in any case mistaken your path and are out of the way, make no difficulty of being reclaimed and set right ; your ministers love and duty put them



upon it, and love and duty call aloud upon you to take it kindly at their hands ; this is a lesson which reason teaches, but grace only learns to be well vers'd herein, and duly regarded it will greatly evidence your proficiency in the school of Christ. *David* breathes forth a spirit entirely christian when he says, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, &c.* Psal. cxli. 5.

Cultivate then this christian temper among yourselves and towards your ministers, and the God of peace will be with you ; which reminds me of my promise of spending a few thoughts on the last general head.

II. To consider a little the necessary and near connection there is between a church's peace, a church's prosperity, and the usefulness and comfort of their ministers among them.

This last direction in the text relates to a church's carriage and christian demeanour towards one another, though not exclusive of those that are over them in the Lord. *And be at peace among yourselves.* A gospel-church is a family of peace, bless'd with the fruits of peace, govern'd by the prince of peace, and ripening for the world of peace. It becomes us then ever to pray, *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces,* Psal. cxxii. 7. That which is the strength  
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and glory of civil societies, is no less so to the church of God—peace and harmony are as the walls and ramparts to that sacred inclosure, under him who is stiled the munition of rocks, and whose peculiar blessing and care are as a wall of fire round about it, *Zech. ii. 5.* It is with churches, as it is with particular souls; the enemy may form his formidable attacks, may raise his batteries, and point the threatening instruments of annoyance and desolation against us, but, while peace within keeps possession of the throne, tho' he may alarm, he can do no more. The safety, the beauty, and the prosperity of *Zion* remain unhurt. This our adversary knows full well, and therefore he will be seizing every occasion, and industriously using every handle to make a breach here. And sad indeed is it when he succeeds in these attempts: strifes and debates, whisperings, backbitings, and evil surmisings, to all which the peace in our text is opposed, are the bane of christian communities: what mischief, what havock, what a dreadful train of disasters have been often seen to ensue, upon the springing up of these noxious and baneful weeds in the garden of God! The blessing in hand is so important and essential to the real interest and prosperity of christian communities, that we cannot too much prize its possession, or be too watchful and industrious in securing its continuance. You as a church of Christ have long enjoy'd  
this

this heaven-born blessing, and I trust will still enjoy it ; it would be very melancholy to learn the value of that blessing by its loss, of which you have so long tasted the sweetness by possession ! I have reserved but little time to recommend the duty, because I hope there is little need for any length of enlargement.—However important posts are to be guarded and secured not only in times of war, but in times of peace ; there is no room to lay down our watch and indulge a carnal security in this case ; any more than in any other, and we should ever remember it was *while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat*, Matt. xiii. 25. “ *Be at peace among yourselves*,” is a gospel-duty which will never lose its weight, nor should it ever lose the christian’s regard ; suffer me therefore to take my leave of the subject and of you, by a word or two of serious and earnest advice as to this matter.

1. As a church of the living God, ever study to maintain a lively sense of the importance of the blessing in hand : when we lose a sense of our mercies we may justly fear we are near the eve of their removal, but while they are duly valued and improved we may cheerfully hope they shall be continued.—’Tis profitable to realize the desolations of war in times even of the profoundest peace. Realize, my friends, let every member of this society seriously realize, the mischievous and tremendous effects of disaffection and discord.

discord. Without church-peace, harmony, and love, there can be no church-communion in the Spirit of Christ, there can be no ministerial freedom and closeness in our work, and every zealous effort for your greatest instruction and good will be misunderstood, and render'd abortive. There will be little unity and activity in the most necessary measures for your common edification and growth, none can exert themselves without offence, no gifts can be exercised without the imputation of pride and forwardness, and no christian visits made but with stiffness, caution, and reserve ; and these things quench the Spirit, cramp your ministers, close your lips and hearts towards one another, and thus entirely elude the very greatest advantages of a gospel-church-state. Add to these things the little prospect there is of a church's increase and enlargement, where peace is found no more, for who would join himself a member in a family of contention ? and, what is worst of all, we may expect the loss of his presence and blessing who is the God of peace, for the Spirit of peace will not dwell with the sons of strife.—Barrenness and leanness of soul are ever the consequences of indulging our own spirits, and the waters of strife are neither healing nor fructifying. The duty of every church-member is to act harmoniously with the body, to subject his spirit to the measures and conduct of the whole in all things which are consistent with the laws

of Christ, the order of his house, and the spirit and truth of real religion. He that does otherwise acts to his own hurt, sins against himself, his brethren, and the Lord, and knows not how far God may lay the reins on the neck of his corruptions, when he ventures to give way to wilfulness and humour. Therefore,

2. As a church of Christ ever follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith ye may edify one another. *Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*, Psal. cxxxiii. 1. As the blessing is great be at no little pains to continue and increase it: to this end, *obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves*, Heb. xiii. 17. Submission and self-denial for Christ's sake are choice plants which produce the most precious fruits. Aim to please one another rather than to have your own will or way. Make conscience of keeping close together in meetings for prayer, church-meetings, religious visits and converse, faithful admonitions and cautions, as well as of a stated attendance on more public ordinances. Remember the covenant which is between you; you therein engaged to walk together, to stand by, encourage, and, as to what in you lies, to strengthen each other's hands in the Lord, and take care that in no case you weaken them; this is to act in his service who pays the worst of wages. With this  
view

view be sure to know one another, as well as those that are over you in the Lord, cherish the most spiritual affections, and perform the kindest of offices, as there is occasion. Mark them who would cause divisions, esteem him who would prejudice you against your brother as your common and dangerous foe, and the more dangerous because he wears the mask of friendship. In a word, follow the things that make for peace by a conscientious and due exercise of that christian discipline in the church, which also is Christ's ordinance for good: faithful admonitions in the Spirit of Christ are by no means to be neglected towards the clamorous and unruly. Few husbandmen will patiently bear with a person in their house, who persists in sowing cockle or darnel among their wheat after he has been discover'd.—The Spirit and Word of God are our faithful guide in all these matters, and the closer a church keep to the sacred rule, the more peace and the more prosperity are found among them.—

To sum up the whole.

Remember you are a visible church of Christ, the throne of the King of kings, a real theocracy, the seat of his authority and presence, and the brightest emblem of heaven that is to be found on earth. Triumph in the grace wherein you stand as a church, prize your privileges, and walk worthy of your charter. Bear in mind your past and present mercies

as a particular community. Overlook not the mercies of this day ; you are now so provided as to have the pleasing prospect of the continuance of all ordinances without interruption to your peace and communion, a singular kind providence in a day wherein many churches find it no small difficulty to suit themselves with such as shall faithfully dispense the word of life among them. Forget not the peculiar obligations you are under to renew your zeal, love, and charity, your courage, vigour, and activity, your watchfulness and circumspection. Take afresh the buckler and shield, even the whole armour of God, fight the good fight till you have finish'd your course, and shall receive the crown. 'Tis but a little while and both pastors and people shall rejoice together in the glorious presence of him who sits upon the throne, and is able and faithful to supply what is yet lacking in your faith, and wholly to perfect that which concerns you. Be ye faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life,



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THE  
EXHORTATION

Given to the

Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. *John Stafford*.

BROTHER,

UPON the public and solemn Declaration you have made, that, after many humble and fervent Addresses at the Throne of Grace for Direction, you have thought it your Duty to comply with *the Call of this Church*, in consenting to be join'd in *the Pastoral Office*, as well as in *the Ministry of the Word* among them, 'tis expected, as it has been desired, that I should now give you a Word of serious *Exhortation* suitable to the Occasion.

THIS I shall attempt, as the LORD shall help me, in calling your Attention to *the Appeal* which the Apostle *Paul* made to the Elders of the Church at *Ephesus*, as we find it in *Acts*,



*Acts*, ch. xx. v. 26, 27.

*Wherefore I take you to record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men. v. 27. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of GOD.*

AFTER reading these Words I presume it will be thought natural and just, that I should press you, *Sir*, to endeavour by all means through the whole Course of your Ministry, to lay a proper Foundation, that, when the Time shall come that the People among whom you labour shall see your Face no more, you may then be able to make the *like Appeal*, that you also are *pure from the Blood of all Men*, having been enabled through Grace both to declare the revealed Counsel of GOD, and in all Things to act agreeably to it.

THAT I may be the more particular and full in my Address, let me desire you to consider,

I. WHAT the Example in the Text directs and teaches you to aim at; even that you may be *pure from the Blood of all Men*.

II. FOR what weighty Reasons you should make this your Care. And,

III. BY what Methods of Conduct you may hope to be preserved pure as the Apostle was.

Please

Please to consider,

I. **WHAT** *the Example in the Text directs and teaches you to aim at.* It is you see that you may be *pure from the Blood of all Men.*

It would be very weak to imagine that the Apostle here meant no more than that he had been free from doing any Injury to *the Bodies of Men*, or from offering Violence to *the Life* of any Man ; or, that, in a literal and civil Sense, he had been free from *committing Murder*. This is an Innocence that almost every Man can claim, a very few only excepted. By the Solemnity of the Appeal we are led to conclude, that the Apostle is here speaking, not barely of his civil or moral Behaviour as *a Man*, or *a Christian*, but that he refers to his Conduct as *a Minister* of CHRIST, and as one who was sent forth *to preach* the everlasting Gospel : and he himself well knew, and he supposed that the Persons to whom he made his Appeal did likewise know, that whoever undertakes the Work of a Gospel-Minister, if he is unfaithful in the Discharge of it, he becomes guilty of Blood, but that if he is faithful he shall be pure from that Guilt.

THE Fitness and Propriety of the Language in taxing unfaithful Ministers with being guilty of the Blood of Men, while those that are faithful are declared to be pure from it, will sufficiently appear if we briefly consider two Things,

(1.) IT is often declared in Scripture, *that Blood is the Life of an Animal.*

AND there is such a close Connection betwixt the Blood and Life of a Man, that to take away *his Blood* is to take away *his Life*; and to take away the Life of a Man by any Means whatever is constructively and in effect to shed his Blood. Hence *shedding a Man's Blood* is a Phrase very naturally used for *slaying or killing a Man.*

AND as the *Act* of Murder, so the *Punishment* of it by *Death* is exprest by the shedding of Blood: as particularly in that known Place, *whoso sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed*<sup>a</sup>. We may farther consider,

(2.) THAT, as he who kills the Body of a Man is guilty of Blood in a natural or civil Sense, so *he who is the sinful Cause or Occasion of the eternal Death and Ruin of a Man's Soul may justly be said to be guilty of Blood in a spiritual or theological Sense.* Of so horrid and black a Nature is the Guilt of any, and of unfaithful Ministers especially, who are wickedly accessory to the Ruin of Souls, that in a *metaphorical and spiritual* Way of speaking they bring themselves under the *just Imputation* of Murder or Blood; and that in *an Instance* which of all others is the most dreadful to be committed.

FROM

<sup>a</sup> Gen. ix. 6.

FROM these Remarks we may learn, that the Apostle's *Design* in the Text was to assert his *Faithfulness and Care in the Exercise of his Ministry*. He appeals to those among whom he laboured, and who were most intimately acquainted with him, whether his Preaching was not such as might justly exempt him from the Charge of being accessary to the Ruin of Mens Souls, and therefore such as did afford him a most solid Ground upon which to assert, that *he was pure from the Blood of all Men*. As to *himself* he was conscious, and as to *those* he appealed to he knew that they had no Reason to think otherwise, but that, thro' the whole Course of his Ministry to that Day, he had preach'd the Gospel of CHRIST in Sincerity before GOD, and that he had not shunned, but endeavour'd to declare the whole Counsel of GOD, without corrupting any Part of his Word.

AND this, *Sir*, is the very Thing at which you know you are constantly to aim, *viz.* that, after the good Example of the Apostle, *renouncing the hidden Things of Dishonesty*, and carefully watching against *walking in Craftiness*, and *handling the Word of GOD deceitfully*, you may by *Manifestation of the Truth commend yourself to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of GOD*<sup>b</sup>; and may, at the Finishing of your Course, have the like Peace, Com-

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fort,

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 2.

fort, and Joy, as the Apostle had from knowing in yourself, and in having others to testify for you, that you are *pure from the Blood of all Men.*

THIS leads me to another Head proposed in this Exhortation, under which I shall desire you to consider,

II. *THE weighty Reasons which should excite us to the most serious and holy Concern in this Matter.*

AND many such arise from *the Importance of the Case.* Murder, even of a *civil Kind*, is a Crime of such a heinous Nature, that the very Thought of committing it should ever be rejected with Dread and Terror. But when we consider the vast Importance of *spiritual* and *eternal* Things in comparison with Things that are but *temporal* and *momentary*, the Reasons which should make us solicitous and watchful, that we may be kept from murdering *the Body*, should make us much more solicitous and watchful, that we may never be accessory to the Ruin of *the Soul* of a Man.

THE Evil of Murder, or of unjustly taking away the natural Life of a Man, appears remarkably *in three Things*; the Consideration whereof may convince us, that it must be of the utmost Importance to be kept pure from the Blood of Men in *a spiritual Sense.*

MURDER

MURDER appears to be one of the most dreadful Evils we can commit upon account of,

(1.) THE *Injury that is hereby done to the Person that is slain.*

(2.) THE *Injury that is done to the Prince, who is thereby unjustly deprived of a Subject.*  
And,

(3.) THE *inconceivable Mischief which the Murderer brings upon himself.*

WHILE I touch upon these *natural Things* I am persuaded, *Brother*, that a Person of your Light, Judgment, and Penetration, will readily discern how justly, and, with what additional Force of Reason, they may be applied to *Things spiritual*. And I doubt not but that a Person of your religious Temper and Disposition will be careful to make the Application for your own Direction and Caution, that you may be quicken'd to constant Watchfulness and Prayer, that, thro' Grace, you may be preserv'd *pure from the Blood of all-Men*.

LET me then beg of you to consider seriously what Evil there is in Blood-guiltiness, upon the Account of the Injury that is done,

(1.) To *the Person that is slain.*

No sooner is the *fatal Blow* given, but he that is smitten is at once cut off, not only from all the most valuable *Comforts* that can be enjoy'd as to this World, but he is deprived likewise of that which is ever to be

counted vastly preferable to any other worldly Enjoyment whatever, even *Life itself*.

IT is doubtless very wicked and injurious for any unjustly to deprive or abridge their Fellow-mortals of the ordinary Supports or Comforts of Life, such as Food or Raiment; but our LORD has taught us, that *the Life is more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment*<sup>c</sup>. From which we may justly infer, that to take away Life is a Crime inexpressibly greater than any Plunder or Robbery that can be committed, which does not immediately affect *Life itself*.

So then to take away Life unjustly is the greatest Injury that can be done to a Man by the most bitter, oppressive, or outrageous Enemy he has upon Earth.

BUT what is the Injury which a Man suffers, when *his Body* is slain, in comparison with that he must suffer, if *his Soul* be ruin'd, for this Ruin involves in it the absolute Loss of *all Good*. The Soul that is ruined is deprived of all Peace and Comfort. It is utterly and eternally excluded from the Loving-kindness of GOD, *in whose Favour is Life*<sup>d</sup>, *and whose Loving-kindness is better than Life*<sup>e</sup>.

YEA the Destruction of the Soul carries with it the most exquisite, intolerable, and endless Misery. The Injury then which is done to the Soul by those, who, according to  
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<sup>c</sup> Matt. vi. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Psal. xxx. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 3.

the Language in the Text, are guilty of its Blood, must be great beyond all Comparison, or human Conception. The Harm and Loss that is brought upon the ruined Soul is utterly irreparable, and the State of Misery into which it is plunged is unchangeably hopeless, yea, ever attended with the most certain and tormenting Despair.

FURTHER, the Evil of Murder appears in the Injury that is done,

(2.) *To the Prince, who is thereby unjustly deprived of a Subject.*

By the infallible Maxim of Solomon we are assured<sup>f</sup>, that *in the Multitude of People is the King's Honour : but in the Want of People is the Destruction of the Prince.* We may justly infer, that to murder a Subject must be a most vile Thing, for this Wickedness has in its own Nature a Tendency to weaken the King's Throne, to eclipse the Glory of his Crown, and wrest the Sceptre out of his Hand ; yea, to bereave him of his Subjects, is in effect to say, *He shall be no King.*

AND I humbly conceive that from this Illustration of the Evil which there is in Murder, because of the Injury it does to the Dignity of an earthly Prince, we may very justly take an Argument to set forth the Greatness of the Wickedness described in the Text by this Phrase, *the Blood of Men* : for hereby 'tis intimated,

<sup>f</sup> Prov. xiv. 28.



mated, that they who are guilty thereof are chargeable with the horrid Crime of attempting to prevent the Increase, yea to diminish the Number of the Subjects of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, whose Glory it is to be *King of Kings, and LORD of Lords*<sup>b</sup>; *who has prepared his Throne in the Heavens*<sup>h</sup>, and has a Right to exercise a Dominion and Rule over all.

'Tis a most base Thing for any to deny him their own personal Allegiance and Subjection, but it is still worse to embolden others in their Disobedience and Rebellion. And, when unfaithful Ministers are the Occasion of the Ruin of Souls, their Guilt of Blood is most sadly aggravated, since, according to the Duty of their Station and Character, they are under special Obligations to *gather* Subjects to Christ; but instead of this they *scatter* from him those over whom he had an indisputable and unalienable Right to reign. With what an insupportable crushing Weight will the Charge fall upon those who, being entrusted with the Key of Knowledge, not only refused to enter into the Kingdom of Christ themselves, but even hindred others, who, according to many outward Appearances, seemed willing to enter. All who at the last Day are found under the Imputation of such Guilt will be slain by the Scourges and Lashes of their own Conscience. Let us therefore consider,

(3.)

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xix. 16.<sup>b</sup> Psal. ciii. 19.

(3.) THE *inconceivable Mischief which the Murderer brings upon himself.*

IT was of old settled as a standing and invariable Law by the supreme Governor and righteous Judge of all, that the Punishment of Murder should be *Death*; and this Appointment was so strict, and the Punishment threatned was to be inflicted with that absolute and unalterable Severity, that no Substitution was to be admitted, for no Sacrifice was ordained under the *Mosaic Dispensation* whereby so much as a *typical Atonement* might be made, nor could even a *ceremonial* or *political* Forgiveness be obtained; but the irrevocable Edict required, that *whoever he was that did shed Man's Blood, by Man should the Blood of that very Person be shed*<sup>i</sup>.

THUS it appears, that the Punishment of Murder was a capital Punishment, and the most dreadful of any that it was in the Power of an earthly Magistrate to inflict; and as to this World it was the utter Ruin of the guilty Criminal.

BUT what is the Severity of this Punishment in Comparison of that *everlasting Destruction* which will certainly be the Punishment of those impenitent, unfaithful Ministers, who die under the sad Imputation of the Blood of Men, in a spiritual Sense; which is the very worst Kind of Blood-guiltiness that can be contracted?

I

AND

<sup>i</sup> Gen. ix. 6.

AND it is fit we should here observe, that he who puts a *Stumbling-block*, or *Occasion to fall in his Brother's Way*, is constructively guilty of *destroying one for whom*, as far as he could tell, *Christ had died*. Such Guilt, it is evident from what the Apostle says <sup>k</sup>, may be contracted by Persons in a private Character; yea, when even such a Man, through a Neglect of faithful Rebukes, suffers Sin to rest upon his Neighbour, this is interpreted an Hatred of his Brother <sup>l</sup>; and this *Hatred* is branded as *Murder* <sup>m</sup>, and exposes to Death.

Now if this be the Case as to Persons in a *private Station*, how dreadful will be the Condition of unfaithful Ministers who bear a *public Character*, and are set as *Watchmen* upon the Walls of the New-Testament *Jerusalem*, on purpose that they may warn Sinners of the approaching Evil, that Men may prepare to meet their God?

If they, by neglecting to give Warning according to the Word of the LORD, be the Occasion of Sinners dying in their Iniquities, *the very Blood of those Sinners shall be required by GOD at the Watchman's Hand*, as the Words of the Prophet teach us <sup>n</sup>.

AND what a dreadful Season will be the Time when the LORD *shall make Inquisition for Blood*? That Day you know, Sir, will be to the unfaithful, negligent Watchman a  
Day

<sup>k</sup> Rom. xiv. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Lev. xix. 17.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John iii. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 6.

Day of Wrath, a Day of Trouble and Distress, a Day of Wastefulness and Desolation; for the LORD will pour upon such the fierce Anger of his Indignation, and with the Fire of his Jealousy and Vengeance will he devour them.

THUS we see, that if Ministers of the Gospel have any due Compassion for the Souls of others, any holy Regard to the Honour and Dignity of the infinitely glorious King of *Sion*, or any just Concern for the future Comfort, Peace, or Safety of their own Souls, they will be convinced there is the greatest Necessity for them to watch and pray constantly that they may be kept *pure from the Blood of all Men*.

BUT I shall now under the last general Head desire you to consider,

III. *By what Methods of Conduct you may hope through Grace to be preserved pure, as the Apostle was.*

I shall now earnestly press you to a diligent, constant, and conscientious Imitation of the Example of the Apostle, as it is here laid before us in the Text, and which teaches us that, if we desire to be pure from the Blood of all Men, we must carefully attend to

I. *THE special and great Design of our Ministry, which is, to declare the Counsel of God.* And,

2. *THE faithful Manner in which this ought to be done*, namely, with an humble Endeavour to declare *all his Counsel*.

LET me then entreat you to attend,

1. *To the special and great Design of your Ministry*, which is, *to declare the Counsel of God*. From him you receive your *Commission*, and your *Instructions*; and it is your Duty *to preach the Preaching he bids you* °, with such Exactness that you never dare to preach any Thing else in his Name.

MINISTERS are now sent upon *the same Errand* as the *Apostles* were, and that is *to preach CHRIST*; and we should be as fully and resolutely determined as ever the Apostle *Paul* was, that in our Preaching we likewise will *not know any Thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified* <sup>p</sup>.

BUT we are always to remember that our Commission extends no farther than to a Declaration of the Counsel which God has revealed in his Word. The Canon of Scripture being closed, it would be no better than the wildest Enthusiasm, and Madness, or Blasphemy itself for any Men now to pretend, that, by an immediate or infallible Inspiration from above, they are let into the Knowledge of any of the divine Secrets which God has reserved in his own Breast, and which are not openly and publicly revealed in the written Word of the Truth of the Gospel: and  
let

° Jonah iii. 2.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.

let me caution you, *Brother*, though I presume there is little need of it, that you never declare any Thing as a Part of God's Counsel for which you have not a divine Warrant in the Testimony and Attestation of the Scriptures ; but whatever is there revealed to be his Purpose, whether with respect to Things natural, or Things spiritual, Things temporal, or Things eternal, that is the Counsel of God, which his Ministers in general, and you, *Sir*, in particular are bound to declare. Attend then to this special and great Design of your Ministry, as also,

2. *To the faithful Manner in which this ought to be done.*

And let it be done in such a Manner as that there may be no Reason for it to be said of you that you did not sincerely endeavour, according to the best of the Light, Capacity, and Opportunity the LORD gave you, to declare *all his Counsel*: yea, so as that if possible there may be no Room for any others, or for your own Conscience to upbraid you with a Neglect, or to accuse you of Unfaithfulness, because you knowingly and wilfully shunned to declare any Part of it.

BE much upon your Guard as to this at all Times, but more strictly so at some special Seasons of Trial and Temptation. Carefully abide in *every Part* of the Doctrine of CHRIST, but be sure to look well to your own Stedfastness, and be zealous to encourage

and promote the Establishment of others in what one Apostle calls *the present Truth*<sup>¶</sup>, and another, *the Word of God's Patience*<sup>†</sup>. And any Truth of divine Revelation may be *emphatically* thus termed when it becomes a Matter of Dispute, and is made the Controversy of the Day. Such you know was the Case, even in the Times of the Apostles, as to the plain fundamental Doctrine of *the Resurrection of the Dead*<sup>‡</sup>. And are not several Truths which are of as great Importance in the divine Scheme of our Salvation, and as clearly revealed in the Word of God, warmly disputed and flatly denied by some of the proud Philosophers and daring Infidels of the present Age?

WITH what Insolence and Boldness do some contradict the Scripture-doctrines of the *Eternal Deity* of the SON of GOD? of the infinite Merit of *his Atonement*, and the Imputation of *his Righteousness*, together with the *Personality* and *Deity* of the infinitely Blessed and Holy SPIRIT? and of the absolute Necessity of his *discriminating, efficacious, and omnipotent Grace* that Souls may be renewed, and the Hearts of Sinners be turned and set right for GOD? How many dispute against the *Sovereignty* of GOD's Mercy? the *Immutability* of his Love, and openly deny the Doctrine of the Saints certain and *final Perseverance* in Grace, and other grand Articles

¶ 2 Pet. i. 12.

† Rev. iii. 10.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

cles of the Christian Religion, in which the Glory of GOD, FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, the Comfort of Believers, and the Power of true Godliness are most nearly concerned ?

BUT the more strenuously and artfully any of the peculiar and distinguished Doctrines of divine Revelation are opposed, or the more contemptuously they are treated by the openly Profane, or by lukewarm carnal Professors, so much the more let us watch and pray, that, through an happy Increase in the Faith and Love which is in CHRIST, we may with all holy Boldness, as well as Meekness and Patience, speak *the Truth as it is in JESUS*. Let it be our humble and serious Endeavour to be instrumental in the Hand of the LORD in establishing the Saints, and *instructing those that oppose themselves, if GOD peradventure will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth*<sup>a</sup>.

BUT, that I may keep within the Limits of the Time allotted for this Part of the Work of the Day, I must hasten to a Conclusion, after I have just pointed at *a few Things* which the Dreadfulness of the Guilt of the Blood of Men shews to be proper Subjects for a Minister's daily and most serious Meditation, such as the *Importance of his Work*, and the *Strictness and Awfulness of the Account* which he must give in the Judgment of the last Day. None therefore can be under a greater Ne-  
cessity,

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.



*cessity*, or *stronger Obligations*, than Ministers are to *be diligent and circumspect* in every Part of their Work, for therein the eternal Life and Salvation of the Souls of many are most deeply concerned: consequently none can stand in greater need of constant and special Help from above than they. And as they should be fervent in Prayer for themselves, so they cannot but desire the earnest Prayers of the People that great Grace may be upon them.

FARTHER, from what we have heard, we may learn that there are none who can have more Reason to be thankful for *the Fountain that is set open for Sin, and for Uncleanneſs*\*, than they have: for they know, that it is only through the Blood and Grace of the everlasting Covenant, that they can be preserved pure or be delivered from *the Blood of all Men*.

LET me now earnestly beseech and solemnly charge you, *Brother*, in the Presence of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, of his holy Angels, of this Christian Assembly, and Church of the living GOD, that you constantly watch and pray, that you may never in any Instance, at any Season, or upon any Occasion, *desert or balk* the Truth; no, not through the flattering Smiles of the dearest worldly Friends, or the threatening Frowns of the most avowed and bitter Enemies.

LET

\* Zech. xiii. 1.

LET no Influence make you shun to declare *any Part* of the divine Counsel, touching the wonderful Plan which God has settled and revealed,—either with Regard to his Way of saving Sinners through the Mediation and Righteousness of CHRIST *alone*,—or with Regard to the Way and Order of that spiritual and evangelical Worship to which the HOLY GHOST directs and quickens the Hearts of his People ; — or with Regard to the godly Conversation and Holiness of Heart and Life, in the daily Observation and Practice whereof true Believers, and all that *name the Name of* CHRIST, are enjoined to walk.

SHUN not to declare any one Truth of divine Revelation, but publish with the warmest Zeal those especially which give a Display of the adorable and infinite Wisdom of God in the Contrivance of the mysterious and glorious Method of Salvation, and of the unsearchable Riches of his Grace, in giving his well-beloved and only - begotten Son to be the Redeemer ; and those which set forth the Sovereignty of his everlasting Love, in his appointing a select Remnant, as a chosen Generation, to be the Heirs of Salvation ; and those likewise which teach the invincible Power and Efficacy of his Grace, in making some of the most obdurate, obstinate, and provoking Sinners to become the willing Disciples and faithful Followers of the Lamb.

YEA,

YEA, shun not to declare any Part of those Truths contained in the Word of GOD, which have a Tendency to *humble and abase the Creature*, to empty a Man of his Self-righteousness, Self-dependence, Self-seeking; or Self-boasting; or a Tendency to encourage the true Penitent, and humble Believer to trust in CHRIST and his Suretyship-righteousness as the only Refuge for lost Sinners, but a complete one for the very chief of them, even the most unworthy, that are by Grace inclined and enabled to flee to him: neither shun to declare any Part of the divine Counsel, which has a Tendency to raise in the People of GOD the highest Confidence in his inviolable Faithfulness and tender Care, or to produce in them a willing chosen Obedience to his Precepts, and the most dutiful, patient, and chearful Submission to his Dispositions in all Cases to the very End of Life, and through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

THESE *Things teach and exhort with all Long-suffering and Faithfulness*: teach them *from House to House*, in your daily Conferences and Conversation with the People, and by your Example, as well as in the Pulpit by your public Preaching.

AND if, while you thus run the Race that is set before you, you continue steadfastly *looking unto JESUS, as the Author and Finisher*  
of

*of our Faith* <sup>†</sup>, you shall find in Time to come, that there was a good Foundation laid for the Testimony of your own Conscience, and you shall be able with a secret and holy Confidence to make your Appeal to others, that you have been *kept pure from the Blood of all Men*: yea, you shall have the Souls of those, to whose Conversion, Edification, and Salvation it pleases God to bless your Ministry, *to be your Joy and Crown of rejoicing in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming* <sup>‡</sup>. Consider what I have said, and the LORD give you Understanding in all Things. *Dear Brother, Grace be with you! Amen.*

<sup>†</sup> Heb. xiii. 2.

<sup>‡</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19.

F I N I S.



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